

F12607 -

THE UNDERWORLD



THE AUTHOR, PRESENT DAY

THE UNDERWORLD

A Series of Reminiscences and Adventures in Many Lands

:: *By H. ASHTON-WOLFE* ::

INTERPRETER AT THE CIVIL AND CRIMINAL COURTS

WITH 21 ILLUSTRATIONS

*LONDON: HURST & BLACKETT,
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, E.C.*

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Limited,
London and Southampton*

TO MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE EPISODE OF BIG JIM COWLEY . . .	II
II. THE EPISODE OF THE CLAIRVOYANT COUNTESS	37
III. I BECOME A " CONTRABANDISTA " . . .	63
IV. " LA GLU," APACHE AND GENTLEMAN . . .	91
V. THE STORY OF JEAN ORTH	119
VI. THE DIAMOND MAKER	137
VII. THE MOTOR BANDITS	163
VIII. LACOMBE OF THE SPIKED SUIT	203
IX. NURSE EDITH CAVELL AND THE WAR . . .	219
X. THE TRIAL OF PRINCESS FAHMY	253
XI. THE BLUE ANCHOR MYSTERY AND JEAN PIERRE VAQUIER	267

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE AUTHOR, PRESENT DAY	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing page</i>
THE CASINO SEEN FROM THE ROAD LEADING TO IT FROM MONACO	30
SONIA VARONOFF, ALIAS COUNTESS PILAR CONCEPCION GONZALEZ	31
LES ROCHES ROUGES	31
DRESSED AS A " CONTRABANDISTA " I JOINED LAGARTILLO .	64
CONCHITA MARTINEZ	64
LOOKING NEITHER TOO FRENCH NOR TOO ENGLISH, BUT MIGHT BE EITHER	65
LEMOINE, THE DIAMOND MAKER	96
THE POWER HOUSE THAT SUPPLIED THE ELECTRIC CURRENT FOR LEMOINE'S FURNACES	96
THE STREAM WHERE I FORCED MY TWO FRIENDS TO LIE IN THE WATER TO DESTROY THE EFFECT OF THE WOURALI POISON	96
THE BRIDGE LEADING TO THE HACIENDA MIRIAM	96
ASHTON-WOLFE IN HIS ELECTRIC BROUGHAM, WITH JULES BONNOT AT THE STEERING WHEEL	97
THE GREY DION-BOUTON CAR, WHICH WAS FOUND ABANDONED	128
GARNIER, THE MAN WHO SHOT THE BANK MESSENGER GABY .	129
BALES OF HAY AND MATTRESSES BEING AFFIXED TO THE CART BEHIND WHICH WE APPROACHED THE HOUSE WHERE BONNOT AND DUBOIS WERE AT BAY	160
THE LETTER WRITTEN BY BONNOT WHICH WE FOUND NAILED TO THE WALL	161
LACOMBE, STRIPPED OF HIS SPIKED SUIT, PHOTOGRAPHED BETWEEN TWO POLICE OFFICERS AT THE DEPÔT	192
THE CUFFS LACOMBE WORE. THESE WERE MADE TO TAKE OFF SEPARATELY, AS ALSO THE SHOULDER-STRAPS	192
PRINCESS MARIE MARGUERITE FAHMY	193
SCENE AT THE PARIS ASSIZES	224
FACSIMILE OF LETTER WRITTEN BY JEAN PIERRE VAQUIER, AND HIS PORTRAIT	225

THE EPISODE OF BIG JIM COWLEY

THE UNDERWORLD

CHAPTER I

THE EPISODE OF BIG JIM COWLEY

ALTHOUGH I have for many years interpreted in various languages at the criminal and civil courts of the principal cities both in Europe and in America, and have been called upon to help in the unravelling of fantastic mysteries ; and although I have, often unwillingly enough, been mixed up in strange and weird events, I have always sought to avoid publicity.

Not because I am more modest than my fellows, but because, especially abroad, it is not advisable to inform the law-breakers how and by whom their undoing was brought about.

War to the knife is more than a phrase in some countries !

It was the Byfleet poisoning case, and the trial at Guildford of Jean Pierre Vaquier, that strange little Frenchman, who conducted his passionate love-making by the aid of a pocket-dictionary, which made my name well known to thousands who had never heard of me before ; and, since so many people seemed curious to know more of my adventures and experiences, I have chosen a few from my notes, and will relate them here.

Let this be my apology for doing so.

.
It is rather strange, when I look back, to think how

often I have found myself involved in events that later passed into history.

Probably this is the case with many whom the drop of salt in their blood drives to roving about the world. The gipsy strain, that comes to me from my mother's Spanish ancestors, has made me a wanderer, restless and ever seeking excitement and novelty.

I believe that it is merely chance and circumstances that originally started me in my career on the right side of the law, otherwise I might have quite conceivably sought to fight with the hunted instead of with the hunters.

Later, of course, I realised the repulsive mentality and cowardice of criminals. In fact, a conviction has grown in me little by little that all crimes and criminals are abnormal, twisted, and the result of some hereditary taint.

I have had so many opportunities of observing the denizens of the underworld ; and to me, the interpreter, they have generally told their stories without reserve. Nearly always I have found them lacking in balanced reasoning powers ; often they were obsessed by a fixed idea—a monomania—and never by any chance were they psychologically sound.

They, who should do so more than others, never seem to trouble to study mankind ; and it is their vanity—a colossal, diseased vanity—that leads to an habitual underrating of their adversary the law, which is always the chief cause of their final collapse.

Although, by some peculiar gift, many languages are as mother tongues to me, I am a Londoner. I was born in Kennington in 1881. My father, Dr. W. Wolfe of

Edinburgh, went to America when a young man, and became an officer in the 8th Cavalry, stationed at Fort Union, near Pueblo, in New Mexico.

He was on active service during the last great uprising of the Redskins, when the Sioux, under their leader, Sitting Bull, made a final attempt to regain their independence. He was one of several who were captured during a night attack, and had already been bound to the torture-stake when the rescue party arrived.

It was in Colorado that he met my mother, the daughter of a Scottish rancher who had married into a Spanish family settled there.

Although I was born in London during a short stay of my parents in England, my boyhood was spent on the prairies of Arizona and Colorado, and until I was fourteen I went to school in Denver.

Later I was sent to a boarding-school in Cannes, on the Mediterranean, and finally completed my education by taking a degree in Heidelberg. Thus I had already gained an intimate knowledge of three languages, and the desire for travelling was born in me when I was still a lad.

I completed my studies in Paris and Marseilles, and it was whilst taking a holiday at Monte Carlo that I first had a taste of real intrigue and adventure, and peeped for a moment through the veil behind which the forces of law and order work. It was this adventure that gained me the friendship of one of the famous men of the French Sûreté, through whom I became an associate and helper of the late Dr. Bertillon at the time when he was elaborating and organising the wonderful French anthropometrical department, which has been the prototype of that of Scotland Yard and of all the Criminal Investigation

Departments of the world. I cannot do better, therefore, than to make this adventure my first story.

.

Monte Carlo is a wonderful place !

The two rocks jutting out into the blue waters of the Mediterranean, which form the tiny principality of Monaco and Monte Carlo, are the undisputed possession of the Grimaldi family, who have reigned there for centuries.

Until the coming of Monsieur Blanc, who founded the Casino, with its gambling-rooms, Monte Carlo, although beautiful and picturesque, attracted few people ; but with the lure of gold it suddenly rushed into prominence, and became famous and wealthy. Like a Western mining-camp after a strike, it developed with amazing speed. Palatial hotels and sumptuous villas sprang up in a few weeks, and crowds of pleasure-seekers, gamblers, crooks, and fashionable women soon thronged the avenues and walks, from which the weeds and stunted olive-trees disappeared overnight, to be replaced by waving palms and gorgeous flowers.

The towering rock fortress of Monaco itself is almost cut off from the mainland, and its unscalable sides once defied the Saracens and Moorish pirates, who made frequent dashes to the French coast.

Now all is peace, pleasure, and luxury.

At the crest of the road leading up from the harbour of Monaco, where the dazzling white yachts of millionaire gamblers swing to their moorings, is the Casino, set like a jewel in the centre of a crown of flowers and verdure.

Over it hovers the invisible goddess of Chance, hypnotically drawing all towards her temple, wherein, by the spin of a wheel, the poor may become rich, or the rich

become poor. The lure is so irresistible that he who has once fallen under the spell ever dreams of its potentiality, and returns again and again.

The Casino stands alone. Around it are only lovely gardens. The back of the building overlooks a wide terrace overhanging the sea. The front faces a broad avenue leading to the town, of which the first building is the well-known bank—the *Crédit Lyonnais*—where one can conveniently deposit one's winnings, or—generally the latter—cash cheques for more money wherewith to try and recoup one's losses.

Blue waters, white marble, waving green palms, and sweet-scented flowers, all bathed in tropical, dazzling sunshine, make an irresistible appeal to the senses, and flitting to and fro, like gorgeous butterflies, are Europe's loveliest women arrayed in the most daring fashions of Paris.

This was the place that the American, Big Jim Cowley, a typical Westerner had plotted to raid.

It would be impossible to imagine a more unlikely spot for such an attempt, and yet, but for a woman, he might have succeeded.

In the course of my daily visits to the tables, where a species of freemasonry unites all and sundry against the common foe, and where superstition is the rule, I had been much amused by a dapper little Frenchman who, always, before staking on a spin, touched the number he had chosen with a piece of coral, shaped like a hand having the two middle fingers closed—a charm much worn in Italy against *la jettatura*, the evil eye.

It did not appear to work particularly well, however, for he nearly always lost.

Then he would stand next to a lucky gambler and watch his every move for a while, enviously writing down the winning numbers. We soon got into conversation, and I found that his name was Monsieur Blanchard.

Although apparently loquacious and good-natured, I could not help noticing that he questioned me very skilfully about myself, whilst giving me very little information in return. He was an habitu  , he told me with a smile—one who came constantly to the tables.

“I have nothing else to do since I have given up business. Just now it is true I am losing all that I have made by years of hard work, but some day I shall hit on the right series, and then I shall be rich again.”

All this he told me—in short, jerky sentences—whilst his light blue eyes roved about the place.

“In the meantime,” he added, “I watch the people, and study them. It is a fascinating study. I try to guess what they are, and what they may be when at home.”

We soon became very friendly, and spent many pleasant moments chatting together.

One day he said, “You have lived in America, you tell me. Then what would you say that fellow was?” And he pointed to a tall, broad-shouldered man just entering, whose burly form seemed to fill the narrow doorway.

“An American, obviously,” I said.

“*Mais oui*,” Monsieur Blanchard answered, impatiently. “I know that; but what kind of an American?”

“Well,” I replied, laughing. “give me a few minutes and I’ll try to find out.”

Walking up to the table where the big man was standing, I watched him.

Talking to him, although they had not come in together, was a young girl, whose fair Anglo-Saxon beauty attracted many admiring glances. It did not take me long to place the big man. During my boyhood I had met many such.

Top-boots and spurs would have suited him better than the patent leather shoes he wore, and, although he bore his conventional evening dress easily enough, I imagined him more suitably attired in loose shirt and chaparraras. I sauntered back to my friend and told him so.

"He is from the West—Texas or Arizona. It is strange to see that type of man here."

"*Très bien*," said my friend. "That is what I thought. Come and have an absinthe at the Café de Paris. I'd like to talk to you."

Much intrigued, I followed the little Frenchman to the café opposite the main entrance, where we sat down.

After looking at me thoughtfully for a few minutes, Monsieur Blanchard began :

"Of course, you realise that such a place as this attracts people of all sorts, and great precautions have to be taken to prevent fortunate gamblers from being waylaid and robbed. A constant watch has to be kept on all who arrive, to prevent the principality from becoming a rendezvous of all the criminals of the world, making it impossible for nice people to live here. Although you may not guess it, a very complex organisation is necessary to the place or it would soon become like one of those gold-mining camps that you have told me about. Well, I have the honour to be at the head of that organisation."

I looked at my friend in surprise.

"*La police ?*" I queried.

"*Non, mon ami—la Sûreté,*" was his reply. "A very different thing. We of the Sûreté merely watch and investigate. We are the scientists; the police are the workmen."

I could not help smiling at this distinction, for I was well aware that until lately it had been considered a very dreadful thing in France to belong to the police. The phrase "*Il en est*" ("He is one of them") was used with the greatest contempt, and I could see that this hereditary feeling was still strong in Monsieur Blanchard.

"*Alors,*" continued my companion briskly, "you will be wondering why I am telling you this. *Voilà!* I know all about you. You are doing nothing; you speak many languages perfectly; I could use such a man as you. You want thrills? Well, you will get more than you imagine in the service of the 'watchful eye,' and, if you will stop to think a minute, it is an honourable service—the protection of the weak and unwary.

"I do not want you to accept in a hurry, however, but I *do* want your help with this American. We have had little experience of such. I would like you to assist in this investigation, and then, if you do not feel like continuing, why, you are free to do as you like. It is an adventure. What do you think?"

"But what's the trouble?" I asked. "He seems all right—just a gambler, like everyone here. What is he?"

"Ah," said my friend, "if I could answer your questions I should know what to do. As you say, he seems all right, but I feel sure he is not. Answer first—will you help?"

"Yes," I answered, "gladly. It will amuse me. What shall I do?"

"Come over to my bureau and I will tell you," Monsieur Blanchard said, rising.

I followed back to the Casino, where, under the steps in a recess, a gendarme was standing. As we approached he saluted, and held open a little door which I had not noticed before. We passed down a passage, and entered a small office very comfortably furnished. Pushing a box of cigarettes towards me, Monsieur Blanchard sank down into an easy chair and motioned me to do the same.

"Now, *mon ami*, I will tell you what we know. This American came to Nice some days ago in a very fine steam yacht called the *Mariposa*, a Spanish word which, I believe, means a butterfly?"

I nodded.

"Not only the lines of the hull, but her engines, too, indicate that she is capable of great speed. On board of her are a numerous crew, all Americans.

"Her owner's name is given as James D. Cowley, of Boston, Massachusetts. Now, Massachusetts knows nothing at all about a yacht-owner of that name, and, in fact, their cable, which I have here, states that no such boat comes from there. Point number one: Why should a rich American lie about his port of origin? You follow?"

"On board this yacht are numerous friends of Monsieur Cowley. They have all visited the tables, and we do not like their looks. There is only one woman on board, the girl you saw to-day. She passes as Cowley's wife, although I am sure that she is nothing of the sort. However, that is not our business; we do not ask for people's marriage lines here—*parbleu, non*. Now, it will take some time for us to obtain further information from America, and it may come too late. You know the

West and its ways. Go down to Nice to-morrow and visit the yacht as a sightseer, and try to make Cowley's acquaintance—help us to find out who and what he is and what he is up to."

"But," I objected, "he may be simply a rich cattle-man, come to try whether he can break the bank. So far you have only the fact that he has not told the truth regarding the port he left from. That may be a mistake on the part of the authorities in Boston. Is that all that you have against him?"

"That and my instinct, born of long experience. I sense a mystery of some kind. If I am wrong, there is no harm done!"

"To-morrow morning one of our boats shall take you to Nice. Report on all you see. You have brains; use them. *Bonne nuit.*"

With this my strange acquaintance rose and pressed a button. The summons brought the gendarme I had seen at the door, who showed me out.

I walked home through the perfumed gardens feeling very important. That powerful organisation "*La Sûreté*" wanted my help; I was one of them! I drew myself up, and threw what I fondly thought to be a keen glance at the few people I passed, but they were much too engrossed in adding up figures on the little roulette cards to take any notice of me, so with a sigh I went to my apartment in the Boulevard d'Italie.

This was my first introduction to one of the most wonderful detective organisations in the world.

Following up the theory that at some time or another every big international crook finds his way to the gaming-tables at Monte Carlo, the authorities have built up a system of surveillance that is without equal.

Although scarcely a week passes without a tragedy of some kind taking place there, the world hears nothing of them, least of all the visitors to this lovely little pleasure resort. The system is so perfect that it is invisible, and its existence undreamed of.

I remember one occasion when, just as I was coming out of the main door, I saw a man on the grand staircase place a revolver to his head and pull the trigger.

Before the echoes of the shot had died away, and before the man's body had touched the ground, two attendants, members of the *Sûreté*, had caught him in their arms. In an instant they had rushed with him into the little arcade to the right of the stairs, and I doubt if anyone but those who were actually at the doors noticed that anything unusual had happened. Perhaps fifteen seconds elapsed between the time when the shot was fired and the complete disappearance of any trace of the suicide. Another time two Italians arrived by train at Monte Carlo. They had come with an elaborate system for robbing women in the gambling-rooms of their jewellery. Two *Sûreté* men followed them to the hotel. How they had discovered the truth I do not know, but within ten minutes of their arrival at Monte Carlo they were arrested in their room and the same night were taken to the frontier, where Italian detectives took charge of them.

I tell these two stories merely to show that I had really reason to feel that plenty of excitement was in store for me.

That night I went to bed with my head full of wild thoughts, and dreamed of nothing but fantastic plots and counter-plots.

The next morning I found a letter that had been brought for me telling me where to go. In the letter was a small

badge—an eye and an ear—the insignia of the Sûreté, also a *post scriptum* to the letter :

“ You will notice, *mon ami*, that there is no mouth to the enclosed. Remember it ! See and hear, but do not talk.”

I found the little boat that was to take me to Nice waiting in the little cove below the Casino, and two hours later I had my first glimpse of the American yacht the *Mariposa*. Hiring a boat, I told the man that I wished to visit this yacht, and was rowed out to her. There was a gangway on the seaward side, up which I climbed to her decks. Looking about me, I saw that she was indeed a beautiful boat, and built for tremendous speed. Some sailors were lounging about, and one of these came up at once and asked me what I wanted.

I explained that I was an American, and that, attracted by the beauty of their ship, I very much desired to visit her. The sailor, a young fellow, appeared quite amiable, and accompanied me. When we reached the companion-way leading to the staterooms and saloon he asked me to wait a moment, while he informed the chief officer of my presence.

Left alone, I strolled over to the open skylight and tried to look down into the rooms below. A murmur of voices reached my ears. Suddenly a woman's voice, high-pitched and angry, came to me :

“ I will not do it—you and your murderous schemes. Let me go home ! You got us on to your boat by lies—nothing but lies. Jack will take me back.”

A growling undertone of men's voices then followed. So interested was I in what was passing below that I

almost yelled when I felt rough hands seize me from behind. Swinging round, I looked into the furious eyes of a man whom I had not seen before, but who was evidently the chief officer.

"What the devil are you doing here, and who are you?" he shouted, and, without giving me time to reply, he called several of the sailors to him.

"Off the boat with him! Throw him overboard! We'll have no prying strangers here!"

Luckily, at that moment the sailor to whom I had first spoken came back and said something to the officer. The words appeared to calm him, for he motioned to the men to let go of me.

"Sorry, sir," he said, slightly less aggressively, "but it's the owner's orders—no strangers to be allowed on board. You must go at once."

There was nothing else to be done, so, reluctantly enough, I climbed down into the waiting boat and was rowed ashore.

I returned to Monte Carlo convinced that Monsieur Blanchard was right in his suspicions, and that here was some ugly mystery.

The little Frenchman listened to my story with a grave face, and consulted several papers and cablegrams in his hand.

"Well, go to the Casino and watch. That is all you can do for the moment, unless you can scrape an acquaintance with Cowley or one of his friends. Thank heaven for the girl. She will be our chief ally."

I assented, and went up to the brightly illuminated doors, where carriage after carriage was disgorging beauty and wealth, as crowds of gaily dressed women

and their attendant male escorts arrived to try their luck.

Although I was well used to it, the entrance to the roulette-rooms always left me breathless.

As one crosses the threshold, a rush of warm, perfumed air, overwhelms one with its cloying sweetness. A guttural roar as of the surf, and a constant musical cascade of rivers of gold, produced by the counting and handling of thousands of coins, deafens one momentarily to the exclusion of all other sounds, then cutting crisply through this wave of sound comes the sharp tinkle of the ball rolling down the roulette-wheel, and the croupiers warning, "*Rien ne va plus.*"

Then at once the game itself engrosses one to the exclusion of everything else.

But to-night I had come to play a bigger and more hazardous game, of which the stakes were as yet unknown.

Looking about me, I soon saw the tall, burly form of the American Cowley bending over one of the tables. With him was the girl whose voice I had undoubtedly heard in the morning, and next to her was a young fellow who, if looks were to be believed, was her brother, for he had the same eyes, as well as the mop of fair curls, that were part of the girl's fascinating personality—possibly the "Jack" who would take her home, as she had cried out so vehemently on the boat.

Sauntering up to this table, I watched the two. The girl and her brother seemed ill at ease, and were not playing, whereat the giant appeared very annoyed; I could see him thrusting money into the girl's hand and urging her to try her luck.

Finally Cowley walked over to another table alone.

I saw him standing near the *chef de partie* at the centre

of the wheel, busily scribbling and consulting a book in his hand. Everyone does this, for everyone has a system of some kind by which he hopes to win.

I pushed my way forward and handed the croupier a hundred-franc note, requesting change—that is, five gold louis, the only kind of change required there. This gave me an opportunity of stumbling against the American and apologising, hoping to get into conversation.

He took no notice of me whatever, but continued to study the small note-book which he was holding.

Now it is a well-known custom at the tables for anyone to look at another's list of the winning numbers, so, without more ado, I leaned over and looked at Cowley's book. With a very ugly word and look he pushed me away and closed it with a snap. I endeavoured to explain and excuse myself, but he simply turned his back and walked away. A surly and dangerous brute! I had seen enough, however. It was no system nor list of numbers that Cowley had in his book. No wonder he was so anxious to hide it from me. What he had been studying was a carefully drawn plan of the table, showing the positions of the croupiers, with crosses indicating the perforated sliding metal covers to the cash-boxes.

My friend Monsieur Blanchard was right—there was some plot afoot that had nothing to do with *bona fide* gambling. Dimly I began to guess what was intended, yet the thing was absurd—a hold-up in such a place! The man was mad. Still, I knew the reckless and ruthless courage of the Western gunman, and a panic even, in a place crowded with women, would be terrible.

I searched for the Frenchman from table to table, and I found him at last sitting in the atrium watching the

crowds. Mindful of the part he played, I greeted him boisterously, and held out the gold coins I had received as change.

" Winnings ? " he queried. " Good. Then let us take a cup of coffee and listen to the music."

Crossing to the café, we sat down. I quickly told him what I had seen and what I thought it meant.

Blanchard was incredulous. What I thought was being plotted was madness ! There were police at every door, bells under the feet of all the croupiers. In all the history of gambling-rooms such a mad scheme had never been conceived.

Calling the waiter, the Frenchman said something to him, and a moment later two other men, who had been sitting at another table, rose and joined us. Blanchard introduced me, and begged me to tell my story again, which I did. Both men shrugged their shoulders and laughed. It was easy to see that I was a novice, they said. Such things might be possible in America, but not here.

After a long discussion it was decided to get hold of one of Cowley's friends and try to question him. I suggested that the brother of the girl or the girl herself would be the most likely to give us information, as there was evidently some trouble between them.

A plan was evolved, which was put into practice the next day.

Men were posted near the harbour-side, since Cowley and his companions always arrived by boat ; whilst Blanchard and myself sat down on a seat to wait.

About five in the afternoon we saw Cowley and the girl step out of a smart little launch, together with some six or seven men. All walked up to the Casino. An hour

later another boat arrived, from which the girl's brother and one other man landed.

It had been prearranged that we should get the brother alone, and so, when they were some distance up the road, two men stepped in between them, quarrelling violently.

From words they quickly came to blows, and knives were drawn. In a twinkling a yelling crowd surged about the group and began abusing them. Of course, they were all Blanchard's own men. Gendarmes then rushed to the scene, and in the confusion the two men who had started the fight, along with the brother, were pushed into a carriage and taken to the cells. We took care that the other man was also arrested—but separately.

I was called in as interpreter, and apologised profusely to the man whom we did not want. He was then at once released.

The other one, who gave his name as John Franklin, was left to himself for a while, and was then taken to the office of the *commissaire*, who proceeded to question him.

My duty was to act as interpreter. The skilful examination of the inspector soon involved our young prisoner in a series of contradictions. At first he was very indignant, and demanded his instant release, threatening us with the United States Embassy and other authorities. The *commissaire* immediately suggested telephoning to the Consulate at Nice, as no doubt the Consul would come at once.

This did not suit Franklin, however. Finally he was informed through me that we knew all about himself and his associates, and were aware of their plans. They would all be arrested and sent to prison—he and his sister as well. For a while Franklin fenced as ably as he

could, but at last he broke down and offered to tell us everything if we would promise to let his sister and himself go free, and, above all, if we would undertake to protect them against the fury of Big Jim Cowley. This we willingly agreed to do. Blanchard then came in, and promised the young man a free passage home for his sister and himself if he would tell them exactly what was planned. So at last the whole extraordinary story was disclosed, leaving us aghast.

Jim Cowley was a gunman, a desperado, who was wanted by the police in Canada for a bank robbery.

He had once been a sailor in the United States Navy, and had several times come to Villefranche and Monte Carlo with the Mediterranean squadron, which visits the South of France every year.

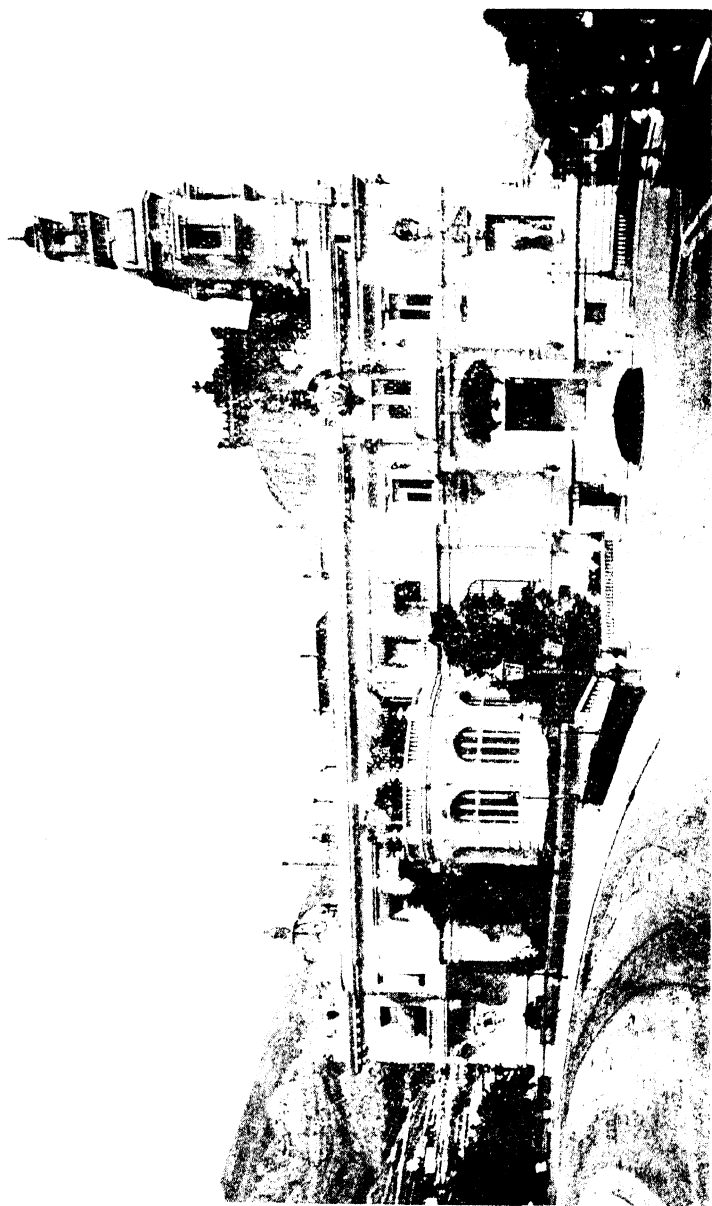
Then it was that he had conceived the colossal plan which he now intended to carry out.

He had with him forty men, all desperate fellows, some of whom had been his accomplices in the bank robbery. These had all come over with Cowley on the yacht, posing as gentlemen of leisure.

Franklin had met Cowley out West, and Doris, his sister, had become infatuated with the giant. Both had been ignorant of his real character, and had light-heartedly accepted his invitation to a European tour.

Doris and Big Jim had become engaged, and were to have been married in England. Franklin himself had been quite unsuspecting, since the invitation had included him also.

There is no doubt that the big man was madly in love with the girl, but he had never intended to marry her. Of course, they had been terrified at the presence of so many men on the boat, but it was then too late to



THE CASINO SEEN FROM THE ROAD LEADING TO IT FROM MONACO.
Here Jim Cowley had arranged to station one of the motor-cars, with its hidden machine-gun commanding the road up which the soldiers would have to come.



SONIA VARONOFF, ALIAS COUNTESS PILAR CONCEPCION GONZALES.
This photograph was taken at Monte Carlo.



LES ROCHES ROUGES
with the entrance to the prehistoric cave dwelling where the Countess
hypnotised her victims.

draw back. Besides, the *Mariposa* had never entered an English port, but had come straight on to Nice.

Both had been in fear of their lives since the disclosure of Cowley's plans, and his threats if they dared to try and leave him had terrorised them when they arrived at Nice. How Cowley had managed to bluff the port authorities at Gibraltar, Franklin could not tell, for both he and his sister had been locked in below.

Cowley's plan was briefly the following.

A former croupier who was on board had given the American accurate plans of the building and the tables, also of the vaults where the money reserve was stored.

On a certain night all his men were to enter the rooms in twos and threes and take up their stations at the tables, some behind the *chefs de partie*. Several others were to guard the doors.

They would all arrive in boats at the little cove below the Casino, and the yacht, which was leaving Nice that day, would be steaming up and down a mile from shore with no lights showing. Cowley knew that the garrison of two hundred soldiers was stationed at Monaco, and that they could only come by the steep, narrow road, at the crest of which the Casino stood. Here he had arranged to have two motor-cars, in each of which was a machine-gun of the Hotchkiss type, one commanding the road to the Crédit Lyonnais, the other the road to Monaco. At a given signal the electric lights would go out, leaving only the oil lamps over the tables alight. The croupiers were to be shot or stunned, and the public lined up against the wall under the menace of the revolvers Cowley's men would be armed with. Then, while his men rifled the tables and collected all the money and jewellery from the terrorised public, he and

several trained safe-breakers would enter the vaults. The whole thing would be over in a few minutes, and as soon as the second signal was given the oil lamps were to be put out, leaving the people panic-stricken in the dark.

Cowley and his men would then rush down to the cove and escape in the boats, leaving the cars to the last, to guard the roads. Once all were aboard the yacht, they would trust to her speed to escape, and if necessary land somewhere in Greece, safe from extradition.

The plot was a bold one, and, but for the mistake made in bringing the girl Doris Franklin and her brother, would probably have succeeded, staggering the world by its magnitude.

For a while Monsieur Blanchard walked up and down the room, tugging at his little imperial. I knew what was troubling him. Could we let Franklin go and trust him not to tell Cowley that we knew of his plans?

I thought we might, and said so to Blanchard. He would never dare to admit that he had given Big Jim away. And so it was arranged; for, although we knew what was afoot, we did not know when the attempt was to be made.

Franklin agreed to tell his sister only that they were to be under the protection of the police, and he would indicate the date and the hour by placing a louis on the number corresponding to the date and another on the number giving the hour.

He was then released, but you may guess that he was very closely watched. Special constables in plain clothes were at once sent for, and fifty of the soldiers in garrison at Monaco were moved down to Monte Carlo.

The next day was the 25th of February.

In the afternoon Cowley and some of his friends came as usual to the tables. I was close behind Franklin when he placed his first coin, and with a thrill I saw that it was on 25 ; his second coin went on 10.

I waited for nothing more, but almost ran out of the rooms.

Never shall I forget those hours of waiting. As soon as it was sufficiently dark we posted our men everywhere. What we wanted was to avoid anything being noticed.

With beating hearts we saw two covered cars draw up in the shadow of the trees.

Before the drivers knew what was happening they were gagged and bound and dragged into the bottom of the cars, Blanchard's men immediately taking their places at the driving wheels.

Cowley's men now began to arrive one by one. Our method with them was simple. As they presented their cards, each was asked to step into the office for a renewal stamp. Once there, they were immediately disarmed and handcuffed.

Cowley himself was too wary, however. He and some of his men must have been watching, for suddenly we heard a strident whistle, the signal from our men outside. We were quickly informed that some twenty of the men, with Big Jim at their head, had rushed down to the boats, revolver in hand, and were off to sea.

A few minutes later we were on board a revenue-boat that had been waiting with two others to capture the yacht.

Then began a wild pursuit through the night. The yacht showed no lights, and by the time we were after her she was several miles away. All through the night
Bw

the chase continued, but when dawn came there was no sign of the *Mariposa*.

The authorities at Suez and Gibraltar had, of course, been warned, but no trace of her or of Big Jim was ever found.

Their escape remains a mystery to this day. The men we had captured were all badly wanted in the States, and were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

I myself had the pleasure of escorting Doris Franklin and her brother to Genoa, where they were put on a steamer leaving for New York. Monsieur Blanchard kept his word, and they were never troubled in any way. The Casino also gave them a handsome present in return for the information that had saved the principality from a terrible scandal, and, incidentally, from a great loss.

Some days later I met Monsieur Blanchard at the tables again. He turned to me with a smile.

"Ah, *cher ami*, I have a wonderful mascot now—better than my coral hand!"—and he held out a golden louis.

"It is the louis that was put on number 25. I told the croupier to keep it for me. Number 25 won—and so did we; and every time I touch a number with it now I win.

"To-morrow I shall want your answer, and it must be yes."

I smiled. "It will be, *cher monsieur*, but—shall we often meet with American gamblers?"

"Well, perhaps not Americans, but while the gold is on the tables people will ever flock to us from all over the world. Who knows what will happen next?"

I may add that not one of all the visitors to Monte Carlo that eventful evening ever knew of the wonderful escape they had, nor has anyone to this day told the story of Big Jim Cowley's attempt and how it failed.

THE EPISODE OF THE CLAIRVOYANT
COUNTESS

CHAPTER II

THE EPISODE OF THE CLAIRVOYANT COUNTESS

THOSE who are in the habit of spending the cold winter months in the sunny south may remember the sensation that was caused by an account in the English and French papers many years ago of the tragic death of the beautiful and wealthy Countess Pilar Concepcion Gonzalez. It will be remembered that while waiting at a wayside station near Marseilles she suddenly threw herself in front of an express train, and was instantly killed. It was supposed at the time that the countess had lost her reason owing to severe losses at roulette.

She was a strangely beautiful woman, barely thirty, and had been a familiar figure for a season at the tables in Monte Carlo. There was a good deal of speculation and curiosity about the cause which had brought about this tragic end to her butterfly career.

No doubt it will surprise many people to know that this dazzling society beauty was not related to any of the noble families of Spain, but was merely an adventuress of the worst type, who had caused the ruin, and even the death, of many young men. Her real name was Sonia Varonoff, and at one time in her career she earned a certain notoriety by posing as a medium and the grand priestess of a new cult. I am informed that she foretold many events which happened later in various countries. Unfortunately, she employed her strange power to swindle people out of large sums of money by various methods, which did not meet with the approval

of the authorities, and which made her sudden disappearance from the French capital necessary.

When I met her at Monte Carlo she had evolved a dreadful scheme which, had it been completely successful and undetected, would have made her wealthy. Like all evildoers, she became over-confident, and tried it once too often, thus bringing about her downfall. It was no friend with whom she was travelling when she met her dramatic end, but Monsieur Dufresne, of the Paris police, who was taking her to St. Lazare.

.
I had accepted Monsieur Blanchard's offer to enrol myself under him in the service of which he was the head, but I was beginning to regret it. Nothing at all had happened since the escape of Big Jim, and I was tired of the gold-crazed crowds around the tables, ever changing and yet ever the same. I began to think that months might elapse before I should again feel that delightful throb of the pulses that precedes some dramatic crisis.

Monsieur Blanchard had once more become the apparently inoffensive, smiling gambler, playing his system, and although I daily walked up to him with an expectant "Well?" I never obtained anything more than a shrug of the shoulders and a whimsical reply, such as :

"Would you credit it, *mon cher*? Five times have I backed thirty-two, and five times in succession zero has turned up. I have lost five thousand francs."

At first I was inclined to resent this flippant reply, but a glance at Monsieur Blanchard's masterful, keen blue eyes showed me that his evasive answer was meant as a snub and a lesson.

In public we were merely chance acquaintances.

It was now getting late in the season, which wanes

towards the end of March. April is already a hot month in this sheltered little spot, where the north winds can never blow.

I had been very interested in a new arrival—a young Englishman, whose flushed cheeks, bloodshot eyes, and excited manner had attracted my attention. He was a reckless gambler, and had little or no control over his emotions. A crowd was always sure to be surrounding him whenever he started to play. Again and again I had seen him pocket huge winnings, and I envied him, as did many others. Still, one sees many such, and I was rather surprised when, one evening, standing behind him, a well-known voice said to me, “ Shall we take an *apéritif* at the café, *mon ami* ? ”

Turning, I saw Monsieur Blanchard in faultless evening dress, and carrying, as usual, a card with the numbers and divisions of the roulette-wheel.

Once in the open, however, instead of crossing to the café, Monsieur Blanchard led me to the right into the grounds, and finally through the small door in the little covered arcade running along the right side of the Casino. We entered what was evidently another office, with a wide table and a standard lamp in the centre. At a second door the usual gendarme was standing, but at a sign from my companion he left the room, shutting the door behind him. My friend walked to the window, which was open, and pulled down the blind ; then, sitting down in the shadow, he invited me to sit in a large chair facing him. His manner had completely changed, and he was no longer smiling. “ Let me see your book. What have you noticed about young Humphreys ? ” was his first remark.

I started.

"My book? What do you know about it? How do you know I have one?"

"Pah!" he replied. "What do you take us for young man—children? I know you have been making a record—very amateurish, probably, but I have let you go on. Now I will show you how it really should be done."

Rather annoyed and puzzled, I handed my book over. He looked through it, and noted down some names. "These four," he said, pointing to several notes in my book, "you say they have won considerably. That is also the report others have made. Nevertheless they are all dead, or at least three of them are."

"Dead?" I exclaimed, startled. "What do you mean? Killed?"

"No, that is just it—they have killed themselves. Now, I can understand a man doing that when he loses; sometimes it does happen." I smiled at the "sometimes." I knew that this was a sore point with the authorities. "But when a man leaves the tables after winning a couple of thousand louis, and then shoots himself or throws himself into the sea, it is bizarre, *hein?*

"Now, this Humphreys is of the same neurotic type. For several evenings we have had him followed when he left the rooms—for his own good naturally, for otherwise we would never think of spying or watching anyone. I want you to speak to him, get friendly with him, and see that nothing happens to him—in other words, be his bodyguard. I make you responsible for his safety. *Au revoir.*"

"Is that all?" I could not help saying, feeling very much disillusioned. "But I do not want ordinary

surveillance work, as we agreed when we discussed my position. Surely any one of your men can do this? "

Monsieur Blanchard looked very sternly at me. " This is not ordinary surveillance work. It is something quite out of the common."

So saying, he called the gendarme, who immediately took up his post at the door, and then went out, leaving me to go back alone. I was just in time to see Humphreys, as I now knew him to be, again gather up a huge fistful of banknotes and stuff them into his pocket. He was talking animatedly to a tall, dark, Spanish type of woman, dressed all in black, whose pale face and blazing, mystic eyes I had noticed several times before. I supposed that, like so many others, she was attracted as much by the winnings as by the man.

Their actions were not in the least suspicious, however.

Leaving the rooms, I saw them walk across for the usual supper at *Ciro's*.

I sat at an adjacent table and watched them covertly. Humphreys was drinking more than was good for him. He boasted constantly of his winnings and his luck, and more than once fished out a great handful of thousand-franc notes, sending one of the banknotes to the *chef d'orchestre* with a request for certain airs.

I noticed that as he became more and more excited and flushed with wine, so his beautiful companion became, if anything, more cold and pale. Her great black eyes followed his every movement with disdain in their depths. A little after midnight they left the place. Calling for a carriage, he conducted the lady to a pretty white villa standing in its own grounds, and, bidding her good night, drove to the *Hôtel Du Beau Rivage*, where he was staying.

The next morning I was at the Beau Rivage for breakfast, ready to take up my duties for the day. Humphreys, however, did not come down for breakfast, and I spent the morning sitting on a seat in the grounds, from where I could see both the hotel and the main drive to the Casino. Nothing happened till luncheon-time, when the young Englishman came out and strolled over to the rooms. Play in the morning is never very interesting, and, after throwing down a few louis, and losing with a bored air, Humphreys walked out.

At the café opposite I saw my chief, but as he did not call me I did not speak to him. I saw nothing further of the young man entrusted to my care until after five, when he walked out of the hotel and crossed to the Casino.

Play was then in full swing, and Humphreys immediately started his usual system of backing one number—seventeen it was—and he piled the maximum on all the “chances.” This means that he risks 19,000 francs to win about 100,000. At first he lost, and then, with a gasp from everyone, seventeen came up four times in succession.

In a short time he had won nearly half a million francs, and as he gathered up the huge bundle of banknotes I saw with a start that the woman whom he had been with the previous evening was watching him from the other side of the table. Her eyes had a glittering, fascinated stare, and were fixed on the huge stack of money. Humphreys saw her at the same moment, and smiled at her.

Together they walked out and called one of the waiting carriages. I managed to obtain another, and told the coachman to follow them at a distance.

Finally they stopped at a place called Les Roches Rouges—the Red Rocks—a small place on the extreme

edge of France ; a weird place, honeycombed with vestiges of cave-dwelling, prehistoric beings, and only visited by those interested in the far-away origin of mankind. I wondered what could take this elegant couple to such a place, and was more surprised when I saw them leave the roads and walk towards one of the cave-dwellings, where fire-blackened rocks still attest that man had dwelt there many thousand years ago.

It was impossible for me to approach them without being seen and my presence resented, and so I had to wait and wonder. Nearly two hours passed before I saw them walking towards me, the woman talking earnestly and the young man listening. Even at a distance I was struck by his deathly pallor. Gone was the exuberance due to his wonderful luck, and twice he stumbled, as if he were paying no attention to the rocky path.

Back once more in Monte Carlo, Humphreys went straight to his hotel, and the woman drove to her villa. I searched in vain for Monsieur Blanchard. Finally I sat down at a table on the terrace, where I saw the waiter whom I knew to be one of us. I ordered a glass of wine, and asked him if he knew where the chief was.

"Marseilles," was the unexpected reply. "He will be back to-night."

Very much perturbed by this unforeseen absence of the man whose advice I needed very much, I went home and dressed for the evening. That night a tremendous surprise awaited all those who watched young Humphreys play, for he lost and lost and lost, and ever beside him, watching intently was the woman.

Finally he turned to her and said something, and with a shrug of the shoulders she walked away. But if he had

hoped that his luck would turn he was disappointed, for he continued to lose. At last, with a groan, he gathered up the money still before him and walked out. I followed him to his hotel, and saw him go up to his room. I immediately hurried off, and went to the little office where the interview with Monsieur Blanchard had taken place. He was not there, and the gendarme could tell me nothing. I went back to the hotel and asked for Humphreys. A lady had called for him, I was told, and they had gone for a drive. Full of misgiving, I hurried out, but no one could tell me which way they had gone. While standing there, not knowing what to do, I was roughly seized by the shoulder, and Monsieur Blanchard's voice—but more agitated than I had ever heard it—said fiercely, "What are you doing here? Where is your charge?" With a gasp I turned.

"I do not know," I stammered.

Without a word he hurried me over to where a carriage and a fine pair of horses were waiting, and with a curt order to the driver we rattled off towards the road of La Turbie.

We went at a great pace through the brilliantly lighted streets, and the sounds of music and laughter that reached us from the open cafés which we passed, seemed to mock us and the grim quest we were engaged upon. What my companion expected I could not tell, but his face as I saw it by the glow of the flaring arc lamps was very pale. I sensed a disaster. Once out upon the winding mountain path, that gleamed white before and above us, I tried to explain things, but was roughly silenced.

Now we had left the last villas behind, and the dark trees closed about us. In the distance an owl hooted.

Soon the horses slowed to a walk as the road became steeper. I could see that Monsieur Blanchard was listening intently, and once he sharply bade the driver pull up, while he strained his ears to the utmost. Far below in the distance we could see the sea, slightly phosphorescent. From it came a dull murmur, but around us all was quiet. A soft breeze caused only a slight rustle among the cedars covering the slope. Slowly we drove on—endlessly, as it appeared to me. My nerves were tingling with apprehension, and a dread of unknown horrors filled me. We reached the little village of La Turbie. Several men who were lounging outside an inn came over at my companion's call. They were evidently there to watch.

No—no one had passed that way, they told us.

After giving them orders, we continued, taking the road that descended to the Cap Martin. Half way down the horses suddenly reared, as a man and a dog came towards us.

"Ah, Jules, is it you?" Monsieur Blanchard said, "*Très bien*. Have you heard anything?"

"*Non, chef*, but I have found this, and that is why I fetched Pierrot, whose nose will do better than our eyes."

So saying, the man called Jules held out a straw hat. Inside was the name of a London firm, and the initials J. H.

Jules and the dog Pierrot climbed into the carriage.

"Drive on," Jules called to the coachman. "It's farther down the road where I found the hat; I'll stop you."

A quarter of an hour later we all got out, and Pierrot was given the hat to smell. Whining eagerly, his nose close to the ground, the dog at once ran forward, straining

at the chain held by Jules. Through the undergrowth we went, stopping every now and then to listen. Suddenly we crashed through the bushes on to the path again. Our search was at an end. Several men with lanterns were grouped around a dark figure lying on the ground. It was poor Humphreys—dead! A small revolver was still clutched in his right hand, a smoke-blackened hole showing sharply on his temple. From this a stream of blood was oozing.

I stood there as in a horrid nightmare while my chief made a rapid examination of the body and the ground. In the meantime the carriage had rejoined us, and the limp body was lifted into it and placed on the cushions. I felt sick and hopeless. I do not remember how we got back to the little office. I was crushed. Monsieur Blanchard did his best to cheer me up.

“Come, come, I am not blaming you. It is just fate. More than ever now you must help. I have been busy all day getting information, and it is clear that Countess Pilar Gonzalez, as she calls herself, has something to do with this tragedy. She was friendly too with that Englishman Henry Sim, and also with Lord X. Both were found under similar conditions. Now, *you* must go and win at roulette. *You* must be the next victim. But never fear; forewarned is forearmed.”

Swiftly he outlined his plan. I was to draw on the Casino for money with which to gamble madly, and apparently win. Of course, it was impossible to make me win, for the roulette-wheel cannot be controlled either way. The staff can no more let anyone win than they can make anyone lose. But, anyway, I should have a heap of money before me, and probably, not caring how much I lost, I should really win.

The next day I began my career of reckless plunging. It was an interesting study, for actually, because I did not care what I did, I won, won, won, till I was as excited and mad as if it had been my own money. This went on for several evenings, until I was enviously watched by many. Several times I saw the dark, pale woman, and felt curiously like a mouse being watched by a cat when she looked at me. I had been told, however, not to speak to her first.

Finally, one evening when I had been losing, and feeling foolishly sorry to see my borrowed wealth disappearing, she came over to me, and said in a deep contralto voice that was strangely pleasant :

“ You should stop, *mon ami* ; you are not in luck to-night. You will lose all. I have seen this so often. Come, let us go for a stroll.”

She did not flirt or make love to me, but there was something alluring and seductive about her just the same. When I suggested playing again, she put her hand for a moment on my arm. “ No, do not go back to-night,” she said. “ You will lose ; I feel it. Come, let us go and sup. You will win again to-morrow. You have won much already, have you not ? ”

I laughed. “ So much that I do not know what to do with it.”

“ Ah ! ” she said. “ Money—one has never too much.”

These words have remained in my memory even after all these years, for they were so characteristic of the woman. Money—it was her god.

We spent the remainder of the evening at *Ciro's*. During the supper I tried to make myself agreeable, and I did my best to play the part of a careless, brainless fool, but I could not rid myself of the idea that I was being

watched intently—that my very thoughts were being read—and my thoughts were ever on that dark, huddled figure, lying so still on the path, with an ugly crimson stream staining the white face. Again and again I lifted my eyes to find her gaze fixed on me, until my head began to swim. Did she know what I was thinking? I could not get rid of the impression that her eyes were trying to suggest something to me, and *that* something was evil, sinister, and depressing. I felt that a horror was hovering near me.

She saw me shiver—and smiled a cruel smile.

“ You are easily depressed, I see, and too temperamental ; but why allow your losses to sadden you? You are rich, are you not? ”

I assented moodily. Love-making was difficult with such a woman, and it was with a sigh of relief that I saw her glance at her watch and then gather her wrap about her shoulders.

I accompanied her to the Villa Azur, where this mysterious woman lived. During the drive there she became quite animated again, laughing gaily as she described some of her impressions of the people she met at the tables. I could feel the cloud of horror lifting from me as she talked, and by the time we arrived at the iron gate we had become very friendly.

“ *Au revoir, mon ami,* ” she said in parting. “ Do not dream of the fatal wheel.”

Instead of going straight home, I walked through the gardens, trying to analyse my impressions of the evening. There was no doubt ; the woman was a cruel adventuress and a powerful hypnotist. That intense feeling of depression and the constantly re-occurring thought of Humphrey’s body, of death and of suicide, had been

suggested. I had heard of such things, of course, but had not truly believed that this power for evil existed.

Dimly I began to perceive what had happened to the others. I went home with my temples throbbing. For once I felt afraid. It was absurd, but I was afraid of the dark and my own thoughts.

I could not control myself, and my nerves were a-jangle.

Finally I drank a stiff glass of cognac. It calmed me somewhat, and towards morning I fell asleep.

I related all this to Monsieur Blanchard the next day, expecting to be laughed at for my tremors. Not so, however. Where an Englishman might have made fun of me, the little Frenchman saw nothing but the unexpected confirmation of his theories.

He asked me point blank if I felt like going on with it. That settled the matter, naturally, for I was already ashamed of the emotion I had shown. I emphatically stated my intention to play the game to the end.

"Very well," he said. "But from this minute you will be watched night and day. I beg of you earnestly not to treat the matter lightly. It is more serious than you think.

"Here is a whistle; put it in your pocket; if you feel in danger at any time, its call will bring one of your comrades to your assistance. Furthermore, give me your pistol; you are safer without it."

"But," I objected, "you surely don't think I should be fool enough to——"

"Never mind, give it to me."

Reluctantly I did what he requested.

"And if that she-devil holds up any brilliant object before your eyes under some pretext or other—a ring,

a mirror, or anything that shines—turn your eyes away or shut them at once, and, if necessary, run. If we are to get any proof of her evil practices you will have to play your part very carefully indeed. I am investigating her past, and if she is the woman I think, she is very, very clever.

“ By the way, if you can, lead the conversation up to Russia, or use a Russian word, to see if she understands. You can say that you have lived in the country. Have you heard her speak Spanish? ”

“ No ; nor have I told her that I speak that language.”

“ Well, *tant mieux*. Keep that fact to yourself ; it may be useful. *Au revoir*, and remember the whistle—as a last resort, of course, for it will put an end to our hopes of trapping her.”

I was glad to get out into the sunshine. The bustle of the Café de Paris made me feel somewhat better, and I sat there for a while thinking over what I had heard.

Finally I made up my mind that it was all nonsense. Monsieur Blanchard was as bad as the rest. Rubbish. Such things were of the Middle Ages if they had ever existed at all. If there was any hypnotism about, it was between the Frenchman and myself. We had acted like the man who tells a ghost-story so realistically that he frightens himself.

I was glad when, a little later, I saw the Countess get out of a carriage and walk up the carpeted staircase into the Casino.

“ That’s better,” I thought. “ Now I’ll see whether I have dreamed it all.”

Paying the waiter, I strolled over to the entrance, carefully looking to see if I had actually a bodyguard.

The fact that no one followed me reassured me even more. In the entrance I ran plump into the arms of my chief, who introduced me to a tall, swarthy Italian—"The genie of the whistle," he said, "and a good man to have within call."

Shrugging my shoulders, I walked into the rooms, feeling a fool.

Just at the first centre table was the Countess, talking to a stout little man. As soon as she saw me she left her companion and greeted me with a smile.

"Who is that dark man you were speaking to?" she said. "I fancy I know him. Is he not a countryman of mine?"

"Hardly," I answered, seeing my opportunity, "since you are Spanish, are you not? He is a Russian."

I watched her keenly, and to my surprise saw her grow deadly pale. Nervously she moistened her lips; then her smile returned.

"Russian? Oh, then I was mistaken; but do *you* speak Russian?"

"No," I said, "I do not, but I have been in Russia."

Again she changed colour. Afraid to say too much, I bent over my card and pretended to get ready for play. All my insouciance had gone. Was Blanchard right, or was my imagination again playing tricks?

I managed to gain a seat at a table, and at once began to plunge, in order to hide my nervousness. I could feel those strange eyes of hers watching my every move, and they were like those of a nocturnal animal, cruel and greedy.

That afternoon I completely lost my head. Every stroke I made seemed fated to win, and soon I had a huge sum before me.

To my surprise, the Countess appeared to grow furious at my luck.

At last she plucked me by the arm, saying :

“ Come, you have won enough. Stop, stop, I beg of you. It cannot last. By and by you will begin to lose, and then it will be downhill, until you lose everything.”

As if in answer to her words, the croupier's rake swept away a heap of banknotes that I had placed on red and *impair*.

Reluctantly I rose and followed her out. I really should have preferred to go on ; but, then—duty first.

Outside, the Countess proposed a drive, to which I assented.

“ Let us drive to Mentone and dine there,” she suggested, and directed the coachman to stop at La Reserve.

After a few moments' silence the woman turned to me and said :

“ Do you know why I made you come away ? I hate that place ; it is accursed. It robs men of their reason. I have seen so many young men, full of life and youth, begin by winning as you are doing ; then one day their luck deserts them, and they lose and lose, and they cannot stop—until they lose even the desire to live. I wonder if any man will ever vanquish that devilish roulette-wheel ? So many have tried, but all have failed.”

Again that eerie sensation of the night before crept over me as I listened to her deep, musical voice, low and thrilling. Her eyes fascinated me, and it was by a strong effort only that I succeeded in turning mine away.

A moment before I had felt joyous and elated ; now the sunshine even seemed dull. It was as if a blight had

fallen over everything. I roused myself with a start from the gloom slowly creeping over me.

"Do you know," I said, trying to laugh, "that you have a strange gift of making me feel sad, when your presence should, instead, make me glad?"

Quickly she seized my arm and turned her blazing eyes full on me.

"Then I was right—you *are* psychical. I felt sure of it last night. Oh, I am glad—very, very glad. You see, I have a strange gift. I am clairvoyant, but not for everyone; only rarely, when I meet a mind attuned to my own. Then the gates of the future are opened to my other self. Oh, with your help, I can question my future, and your own too. You must—you must let me try!"

At that moment we passed the road leading up to the mountains, the road on which we had found poor Humphreys. Did she know of his death, I wondered? As if in answer to my thought, she withdrew her hand from my arm and fell silent. A few minutes later we arrived at the Reserve and alighted.

As we sat down at a table overlooking the sea I noticed that another carriage drew up, and a man and woman got out. The man was the swarthy Italian to whom Blanchard had introduced me. Instead of feeling pleased, however, a wave of annoyance swept over me. It was foolish of my chief! I was no child, and whom had I to fear? Merely a woman, and a very beautiful woman too!

The meal was very pleasant, and our conversation strayed from topic to topic. I found that my companion, **adventuress** though she might be, was widely travelled, **and** possessed of an almost masculine education and.

depth of knowledge. Dusk was falling when we rose to take a stroll. My suspicions had almost left me, but her next words brought them back in full force.

"Let us walk down to the Roches Rouges," she said. "There are some ancient caves there that have always exerted a curious fascination over me. They are old—thousands of years old. Man lived there when all this wide sea was a rolling prairie, and the skin-clad ape-man hunted the elephant on it. I know that, because in those caves I have seen visions from the past."

I said nothing, but I imagined it was more likely that she had seen the bones of those elephants in the museum founded with relics of those caves, for I knew them well.

An extraordinary woman, who could make use of every little fact to help her schemes!

This little conceit of hers put me on my mettle, where otherwise I might have refused, so I consented to go with her.

We walked slowly over the boulder-strewn shore. It was only then that I remembered with a shock that I was treading the same path which Humphreys had taken in this woman's company but a few days before. Grimly setting my teeth, I walked on. Her hand was on my arm, and her low-pitched voice sounded in my ears in a musical undertone. We soon approached the prehistoric rock-dwellings. Passing the first two, we crossed the little plank bridge leading to the third and deepest. At the entrance are the complete skeletons of a gigantic man and woman, covered by a glass slab to protect them. The sun was setting, and an uncanny red light shone into the dark interior. I drew back for a second.

"Surely," she laughed contemptuously, "you are not afraid? You—an Englishman!"

I was, though, for I knew then that at last we were at grips—I and the unknown evil that emanated from this being and clutched at my subconscious self.

Pride prevented me from saying so, however, and together we entered.

“ *Enfin*, my friend, you will let me try, will you not? I am wildly curious to know the future. In you I have a perfect instrument; your soul vibrates to my every thought. Surely you would like to peep past the veil too? Sit down—on this stone that once served as a stool in bygone ages.” As she said this she placed her hands on my shoulders and looked straight into my eyes.

The last rays of the sun lighted dancing flames in those eyes that glared so fiercely into mine; red fires shone in their depths.

A numbing faintness overcame me, so that I sank down on to the stone, powerless to resist. Too late Blanchard’s warning came back to me. Weakly I tried to fumble for the whistle in my pocket; I could not move. As in a dream I saw her take something from a bag—something that glittered and flashed and held my gaze. It was a crystal ball.

Then dimly I heard her next words:

“ Look into the future and tell me what you see.”

Slowly the crystal in her hands grew and expanded—or so it seemed to me—until it filled all space.

Shapes—moving phantom shapes—began to form in its centre. Clearer they grew, and clearer still. I saw myself standing in the centre of a room, and it was my own room.

Before me stood the woman with outstretched hands.

From bulging pockets that phantom of myself drew

bundles of banknotes—money, money, and yet more money, until the pockets were empty.

The scene faded, and another shaped itself out of the mists. It was a room again, and in it was a roulette-table. I knew—how I cannot tell—that this room was in the Villa Azur. Several men were standing around the table playing, and opposite to me was the Countess. I too was gambling, and I was winning, winning—ceaselessly—but the money I won I handed to the woman.

Once more the room dissolved, and this time I saw a road in the mountains, and, staggering along that road, myself, only now I was pale and dishevelled.

With a start I saw the shape that was in my image stop and raise a hand, and in the hand was a pistol!

Horror-struck, I watched the pistol pressed against the temple. Then came a flash, and the form that had been upright was on the ground, writhing and dying. At the horrid sight I felt a surge of utter despair, and then, with a roaring sound filling my ears, I was back in the cave, sitting on the stone and trembling like a leaf.

Without a word to the woman, who was calmly replacing a small crystal in her bag, I staggered out on to the path and began wildly running, stumbling and falling over the rocks. Blast after blast I sent out from the little silver whistle. Running feet answered the call, and strong arms supported me, while a murmur of angry voices and the shrill scream of a woman behind me told me that Blanchard had not forgotten his promise to watch over me.

I was driven back to my rooms, and a doctor was at once summoned, but with my return to the light and life of the town, sanity came back once more, and I was

able to pour out my story in broken sentences to my chief. An injection of morphia was administered to me by the doctor, and my last memory is of Blanchard's face bending over me.

The next morning I felt much better, but the lingering horror of that experience remained vivid for many days. Shortly after ten Monsieur Blanchard came in accompanied by a tall, bearded man whom I knew to be Monsieur Dufresne, of the Paris Sûreté.

"Well, *mon ami*?" Blanchard greeted me. "It is obvious now what happened to those others, *hein*? Only they were not so overcome as yourself. Probably you are truly psychic, as that creature said, or perhaps she put something into your wine at table. The doctor seems to think so. He believes that she used a concoction of jusquehama, a drug that instantly stimulates the imagination and produces hallucinations. One thing is certain—your pockets were full of money when you left the Casino, yet it was all in her bag when we arrested her."

"You have arrested her?" I asked.

"But naturally."

"On what charge?"

"Well, I know that we cannot charge her with black magic—the judges would laugh at us—and she swears that you gave her the money—you probably did, too, under hypnotic suggestion.

"Luckily, Monsieur Dufresne here has other little matters to settle with the lady. Her real name, by the way, is Sonia Varonoff. She is a Russian, and is believed to have been implicated in the death of a nobleman in that country. However that may be, our friend Dufresne

has a prior claim, and he is taking her to Paris, where she will remain out of harm's way for some years."

"But what did it all mean?" I questioned my friend again.

"Clear enough, isn't it? She always made the acquaintance of a man who appeared rich, but, since I imagine that all were not sensitive to her undoubted power in the same degree, she endeavoured to test this first. Then she would seize an opportunity to take them to some quiet spot and under pretence of reading their future, hypnotise them."

"But why?"

"Post-hypnotic suggestion, *mon cher*. You saw Humphreys come out of that cave depressed but fairly normal. Nevertheless, that same night he killed himself. He probably gambled and lost everything that he possessed at the Villa Azur first. We have been there and found a very elaborate but faked roulette-wheel. Then, under the combined influence of his losses and her suggestion, the desire to kill himself became an obsession, until he gave way to it.

"That is the novelty of this woman's system. First she obtains the money, and then she ensures the eternal silence of her victims without raising a hand against them. Only *that*, of course, we cannot prove. No doubt she altered her method according to circumstances. Well, stay quietly in bed until you have quite recovered. Monsieur Dufresne is leaving at once with the lady via Marseilles." And with a cheerful nod the two men left the room.

As I stated at the beginning, Sonia Varonoff never went to St. Lazare, the famous French prison for women. On the journey there she broke from her captor and

threw herself in front of the incoming Marseilles express, and was instantly killed.

.

I recovered rapidly from the poison that I had been given, but for weeks I dared not stay alone, for, as dusk fell, I lived that last scene over again and again ; and, terrible to relate, a wild and irresistible impulse to kill myself would at times come upon me. Monte Carlo became hateful to me, and on the suggestion of the doctor I started off some months later on a walking tour through Spain.

.

I have asked many psycho-analysts and mental specialists for a rational explanation of the power which that woman possessed, but none can do so. Some frankly disbelieve the story ; some even think that I was mad and imagined it all. The only one who has ever tried to give me any help is Dr. Carson Rogers, a man who practised many years in the East. He told me that he once met a yogi who could influence people in a like manner. He also told me that many animals—chiefly snakes and felines, but above all the anaconda, or great python of South America—possess the power of drawing people to them, and to their death, from a distance.

However that may be, Monsieur Blanchard still lives, and can vouch for the entire truth of my weird experience.

I BECOME A “CONTRABANDISTA”





LOOKING NEITHER TOO FRENCH NOR TOO ENGLISH
BUT MIGHT BE EITHER.

CHAPTER III

I BECOME A "CONTRABANDISTA"

PROBABLY one of the reasons why I felt a curious sympathy for the little Frenchman, Pierre Vaquier, was that I, too, had known the agony and loneliness of a prison cell far from home and friends.

As I sat beside him during the long, tragic days of his trial, my mind went back to those days when I had to endure the horrors of a Spanish prison in a little town at the base of the Pyrenees.

.

Casas Rojas! The picturesque name pleased my ear, new to the music of the Spanish language, and the pretty little village nestling at the foot of the Pedra-Torca, a buttress of the dark, towering Sierras, pleased and charmed the eye. Telling my guide I would stay here awhile, I paid him, gave a friendly slap to the mule that had carried me so far, slung my mountaineer's sack over my back, and walked briskly down the narrow, winding street, searching for a *posada*, or inn.

Certainly I did not feel the shadow of coming events chill me on that beautiful, bright morning as, humming a Spanish air I had heard a few nights before, I looked about for a place in which to breakfast. I met only one or two girls, with bright-coloured scarves and gaudy skirts, with whom I exchanged the usual greeting, "*Buenas dias, vayan con Dios.*"

At the door of a large inn I stopped. A tall, muscular man stood in the doorway, smoking a cigarette of the

country. He was exceptionally dark, even for Spain, where blue-black hair and olive skins are the rule. He seemed alert and rather hostile, summing me up with shrewd eyes that had none of the sleepy indifference of the usual village innkeeper.

Although most Spaniards are tall, this man was a giant. His shoulders were twice as broad as those of a normal man. He was dressed in short, tight-fitting breeches that reached barely to the knees, and around his legs were white linen bands wrapped crosswise, and resembling modern puttees. A short jacket, and a red silk handkerchief wound around his head and knotted at the back, completed his costume, at once simple and picturesque. White, rope-soled *espadrillos*, shod feet as small and well formed as those of a woman. A handsome man, and one who appeared startlingly out of place as the host of a wayside tavern.

I gave him the stereotyped salutation, proud of what I fondly thought was a pure Spanish accent. At the sound of my words his frown disappeared. "*Ingles?*" he queried. "*Usted es Ingles, señor?*" ("You are English?") I felt rather vexed that this fact was so obvious from my words, but assented.

"Ah, come in then, come in. Guests of distinction are rare hereabouts." He took my heavy sack from my shoulders and swung it as if it had been a feather.

I told him I should very much like to stay some days if he could put me up, as I liked the place and was on a holiday. We came to terms after some half-hearted haggling, and I was shown to a small bedroom of the bare, ill-furnished type one finds in such small places, although clean, and with a good bed. I stepped in, preceded by Lagartillo, as he told me his name was. His form seemed

to fill the tiny room. It was only then that I really saw how huge he was.

"*Hombre*," I exclaimed, marvelling at his bulging muscles, "you are as strong as a Miura bull."

"*Mas fuerte*—stronger," laughed Lagartillo, "as many a *toro* has found when I was *capeador*. My muscles saved Bombita Chico from death in Bilbao, when I seized the horns of the *novillo* and broke its neck with a twist. Unfortunately, I broke the back of a man too one day, quite forgetting my strength, and that is why I had to leave the bull-ring and become an innkeeper in this hole"; and the hairy giant stretched and sighed.

"*Vamos*! you will want your breakfast, señor. I will see to it."

I looked after him admiringly as he descended the narrow stairs.

What a man to have beside one in a fight!

After a breakfast consisting of red wine and fried beans I strolled around the place and tried to get friendly with some of the natives, but found most of them very taciturn until I happened to mention that I was staying with Lagartillo. The fact that he was my host seemed to clear the air somewhat, and I had a very pleasant chat with several of the young men.

Very soon I began to have an idea that some more lucrative profession than that of agriculture gave the natives a life of ease and apparent prosperity. So near the border, this could only be smuggling. I had heard much about the smugglers, and my greatest desire was to assist at one of their expeditions; but I knew enough to be very careful how I broached the subject, for it is war to the knife—not a figure of speech here—between the authorities and the smugglers.

I did not dare to mention my wish to my friend the innkeeper unless he gave me an opening, for I now understood that he had taken me for a Government spy at first, and only my obvious nationality had dissipated his suspicions.

On the Sunday after my arrival a lucky chance gave me a surer footing among them, and I took advantage of it. I had been told in the morning that it was one of the numerous religious holidays, and that they were all going to Santalazo, a small town about fifteen miles away, to see the processions in honour of some saint or other, and to assist afterwards at the local *corrida*, or bull-fight. Lagartillo asked me if I would like to come, to which I eagerly assented.

It was my first taste of a provincial *corrida*—my first and my last—for, whatever may be urged in favour of the pomp and ceremony of the spectacle in large cities like Madrid, in the country towns it is brutal and degrading in the extreme.

It is, of course, necessary for the matadors to practice and gain experience, and therefore they are forced to fight many bulls with an indifferent troupe of helpers before they can hope to satisfy the critical public of the capital.

The arena at Santalazo was not big. The blazing sun and the clouds of dust made me feel faint and parched long before the fight started. Lagartillo had obtained two seats for us on the *sombra*—which is supposed to be the shady side. With the sun high in the heavens, however, there was little to choose between either side. Added to this was the discomfort of sitting on half a seat only, for my gigantic friend needed more than the narrow space allotted to each spectator.

He chatted gaily, and appeared indifferent alike to heat and dust. There was one comfort, nevertheless. If the bull jumped the barrier and ran amok among the lower benches, a thing that often happens, Lagartillo would twist its neck—so he valiantly assured me, holding out two huge paws for my consideration.

The cuadrilla entered the ring amid a blare of trumpets, clad in their silks and satins, adorned profusely with gold and silver embroidery. Indeed, I have often wondered how these men can fight, jump, and run under a blazing sun, attired as they are—for I have once examined a matador's fighting costume. It weighs as heavily as mediæval chain mail, but offers no protection against the thrust of the razor-sharp horns of the bull.

Swinging across the sand came first the two matadors. Then followed the banderilleros, whose part in the combat is to plant barbed and beribboned shafts into the neck of the bull as he charges them, deftly avoiding his horns by a twist of their lithe bodies. After these came the picadors, mounted on toil-worn horses, condemned to die to provide pleasure for the populace eager to see blood. Then behind them came the *capeadors*, who play the animal with their scarlet capes; and finally a half-dozen red-shirted *chulos*—the handy men, as they might be called.

The column halted before the Alcalde, the Mayor of the town, and the two matadors gracefully doffed their winged hats and requested the Mayor to give them the key of the *toril*, where the bulls are stabled. This is an age-old ceremony. The huge gilded key was handed to them on a velvet cushion, and then the fight began.

Quickly the capeadors took their places, the *toril* gates

swung wide, and a fine young animal, glorious in his strength and ferocity, came rushing in.

Half-way across the sanded arena he paused, pawing the ground and snorting defiance.

Of course, the whole thing is a system. If the matador were to affront him at that moment it would be a duel worth watching. He dare not. If he did it would mean his certain death. The bull has to be tired and disheartened before he can be killed. First the capeadors provoke him. Charge after charge is made across the ring, but always the bovine brain is angered at the scarlet cape, and he attacks this instead of the man. Then came the horror of the horses.

The picadors urged their beasts forward, and at once the bull turned with a rush. With an upward surge of the panting body his horns were imbedded to their full length in the horse's flanks. A fierce toss, and animal and rider were thrown high into the air, to come down with a sickening crash.

This bull killed five horses in succession, although some of the poor creatures still had strength enough left to rise and run stumblingly, until loss of blood mercifully put an end to their sufferings.

I sat enveloped in a red mist. My nostrils were filled with the odour of fresh blood and my ears deafened by the yells and calls of, "*Ole! Ole!*" ("Well done, bull!") I was overcome with loathing, and deathly sick, but quite incapable of turning my eyes away.

The planting of the arrows into the bull's neck came almost as a relief. The banderilleros were very skilful and daring.

Beside me Lagartillo was shouting and yelling himself

hoarse, quite forgetting in his excitement that he was crushing me by his ever-shifting body.

Several times I had murmured an apology to a handsome girl on my left as my huge friend caused me to press against her. She was evidently much amused at my pallor and apparent discomfort. I began to wish that I had not come, and made up my mind to leave after the death-stroke. It came more quickly than I expected.

The matador, a youngster of barely twenty, stalked into the ring, his glittering rapier half hidden under the small red cloth, called a *muleta*. Slowly and warily he advanced towards his adversary.

His reign was short. At the first rush, as he tried to step aside, the bull gave his shaggy head a twist, and his right horn pierced right through the matador's breast.

I could bear no more. Without even stopping to speak to Lagartillo, who was now on his feet, I pushed my way out into the street. As I walked across the *plaza* I saw the girl who had been sitting next to me come out too. So I was not the only one whom the sights inside had disgusted!

Strange, though, how callous one soon becomes, for as I watched her graceful figure, draped in the national lace mantilla, I had already forgotten that I had just seen a man die.

In the Café de los Toros a string band was playing, and, glad of a chance to quench my thirst, I sat down.

From the circular stone building opposite I could hear excited voices. Soon a crowd began to pour in a multi-coloured stream from the doors. Evidently the death of the matador had put an end to the combats. The

people did not disperse, however, as they usually do, but flocked towards another part of the town.

I asked the *mozo* what was afoot. "The battle of the eggs," he told me with a grin. "Does not the señor know? It is the day in the year when all the young girls parade the streets on mule-back and choose a *novio*—a sweetheart—among the young men they encounter?"

"It is an Andalusian custom.

"The women carry a number of eggs that have been emptied of their contents by a straw. These are coloured red and green. If a red shell is thrown at a young man, it means that she likes his looks. He must then try to catch the mule on which she is mounted, while she tries her best to escape. If he captures her, she becomes his sweetheart.

"If the girl throws a green egg-shell at a young man, it means that he already was her *novio*, but that she wants no more of him. It is great fun, and there are many fights, señor, for sometimes it is in doubt for whom the egg was intended. Also it must be caught unbroken, and that is very difficult; for the other men, if they want the girl too, try to prevent the chosen one from catching it."

"And can anyone join in the fun?" I asked.

"Certainly, señor, anyone."

This promised to be amusing, so I rose and strolled down the main street to where the crowds were hurrying. For the moment a religious procession was in progress. As soon as the last of the images had disappeared into the church, the battle of the eggs began.

Mule after mule, a-tinkle with little bells, came down the centre of the roadway. Most of the girls were very handsome. This was the day of their power, when *they*

could choose instead of waiting for the bashful lover to declare himself ; to-day old ties were broken and new ones formed. Soon the fun waxed fast and furious ; egg after egg was thrown. Now and again one would drop, and there would be a scramble, the girl watching keenly to see if the right man got it. If not, a shower of green-tinted shells would rain about the luckless one, amid jeers and laughter from all sides.

I had been looking on for some time, hugely enjoying the fun, when the handsome, smiling girl whom I had seen at the bull-fight came riding past. As she came opposite to me she lifted her hand, and a red shell fell in the sand at my feet, unbroken. I stooped to pick it up, but was roughly pushed aside by a scowling man in the uniform of the rural police, who snatched it up.

Now, I knew very well that the egg had been meant for me, and my temper rose instantly, but before I could do anything the girl had whipped up her beast and was away, with the ugly brute in chase. I also ran after them, but in the crush it was hard to run fast, and I had almost given it up when, down a little side-street, I heard screams. Turning quickly, I saw the girl being dragged off her mule by the same man, who was struggling hard to kiss her.

As I came up she looked around wildly, and, seeing me, called me to help her. Forgetting that the man was one of the terrible Spanish police, I landed a beautiful left and sent him sprawling. He was up in a moment. I gave him no time to draw the inevitable sword, but landed two more blows that I am sure my gym. instructor would have been proud to see.

Jumping on to her mule, I swung the dishevelled girl up behind me and made away. I thought it best to

avoid trouble, and did not draw rein until we had put some distance between ourselves and the *guardias*. Stopping in front of an inn, where much laughter and dancing were going on, I helped her to alight, and we sat down at a little table. For some moments she was busy arranging her disordered hair and dress, then, looking up and seeing my intent gaze, she burst into peals of laughter.

"How funnily you fight!" she said at last. "You hit with your hands. Do you not carry a knife?"

"No," I said, annoyed, "I do not. Even if I did, I should not know how to use it. In England our fists are good enough, and so your friend the policeman found, I am thinking."

"Yes, but Pedro will seek you now, and when he finds you, your fists will not be enough. You must leave at once. I do not want to see you killed. My name is Conchita Martinez, and I live at Huelcos. You must call there some other time. Now you must go."

I refused to move, however, and began chatting and laughing to calm her fears. She paid no attention to my jokes, but continued to look around fearfully, again urging me to go. Suddenly a number of police appeared, followed by a huge crowd. In their midst was my acquaintance, Pedro, his face distorted with rage and much swollen on one side. I was not going to submit to being arrested without a struggle, so I pointed to the girl and then to Pedro, and tried to explain to the crowd what had happened. It was useless; I could not make myself heard.

Seeing me pointing to the girl, however, and glad of any excuse to see a *guardia* worsted, the crowd closed round the police, shouting and threatening. These,

seeing themselves in danger, drew their revolvers. I jumped up on a table, for I did not wish bloodshed on my account, and yelled at the top of my voice, "Stop! stop! There are more police behind you."

Then, before either side knew what this meant, I gave a flying leap from the table over the heads of the foremost, and had the satisfaction of landing full on the chest of my friend Pedro, who went down under the shock. Before I could rise I was seized and something stifling wound around me from head to foot. I felt myself carried off and put on a saddle by arms that were like steel bands. Then the animal under me started off at a gallop. I struggled violently until a well-known voice shouted into my ears, "Enough, little Englishman; you have nearly killed a member of our Civil Force, and you should thank your patron saint that I and *los muchachos* were there to get you away."

Lagartillo! No wonder the arms around me felt like steel, and that he said "little Englishman." I am over five feet eleven, but compared with my rescuer the term "little" was not humiliating. He explained that the black cloak thrown around me was to hide my white clothes, and that the police were being kept busy by the boys—*los muchachos*—while we got away.

The next day, back at Casas Rojas, Lagartillo advised me to stay indoors, which I did. I was not lonely, for one after another the young men who till then had treated me as an alien came and visited me, shaking hands and patting me on the back. "What a jump!" was what they all said; and, "What a face Pedro had! You must teach us the trick."

Lagartillo came up with my meals, and smiled when I thanked him.

I was very anxious to know what had become of the girl Conchita Martinez, and begged Lagartillo to carry a message. This he at first refused to do, since he felt sure that the vengeful Pedro would be watching. He told me then what I did not know—that this Pedro had been an ardent wooer of the girl for a long time, and had already fought and driven two rivals from the town. The girl hated Pedro, and had tried hard to rid herself of his unwelcome attentions. Also Lagartillo informed me that my jump and disappearance had been the signal for a terrible mêlée, in which knives and pistols had played their part, and that several of the police had been severely wounded. Now they were scouring the country for the *Ingles* who had started the trouble—or so they averred.

On my pleading very hard, however, the innkeeper finally agreed to have a message carried to Conchita by one of the women when they went into town the next day.

With this promise I had to be content. I confess that my thoughts were constantly with the girl. Conchita!—a very pretty name. What wonderful eyes these Spanish women had, and what tempting lips! Beautiful Conchita certainly was, judged by any standard, even in a country where handsome women are the rule.

Lagartillo informed me the next day that one of the women had spoken to Conchita, and that she had promised to come to Casas Rojas to see me. She also begged of me to remain hidden and not show myself for a time, until the brute Pedro and his fellow police had given up the search.

I spent the afternoon waiting and looking from the little window.

Night had fallen when I heard voices on the stairs. Lagartillo came in and told me that Conchita had arrived. With a beating heart I ran down. She was waiting in the path at the back of the inn. As I came up, she impetuously threw her arms about me and kissed me full on the lips.

"That is for your brave fight with that beast Pedro," she said, with a delightful little laugh. "Everyone has always been afraid of him, but you are not."

"No, I should think not. I would go down to Santalazo to-morrow but for what Lagartillo tells me. He says that it would cause much trouble for everyone."

"So it would. Don't you know that they are all *contrabandistas* here, and giant Lagartillo is their chief? The *guardias* ask for nothing better than to search for you, for in searching they hope to find more besides. No, no ; for my sake also you must remain here."

So we talked for a while. I do not recall all our conversation, but I know it was very sweet. Conchita was a very woman, full of fire at one moment, soft and pleading the next.

At last the parting came. She had to return to her home, for the hour was late and her absence might be noticed.

My big friend was sitting at the door smoking when I came in. I told him what the girl had said about the *guardias*. He nodded, but said nothing ; something had disturbed his usual good humour.

So I was right ; smuggling was the business of the village. Under the circumstances I was afraid that I had brought trouble with me by drawing the unwelcome attentions of the Civil Guard upon the inhabitants. I

felt very sorry to think that I had so ill repaid Lagartillo for his kindness.

I said as much to him when he came up with my supper.

He looked at me sharply, and his eyes narrowed.

"Ah, the little *chica* has been talking, eh? Well, yes, we are smugglers, but don't worry; we love a man who is not afraid to fight an armed man with his bare hands, and your safety is now in the keeping of our honour."

I thought the occasion a favourable one, and begged Lagartillo to allow me to accompany them on their next expedition.

To my surprise, he seemed genuinely pleased.

"*Hombre*, that is just what has been troubling me. The next consignment is due—when all the able-bodied men go into the mountains. You would have to be left alone here, with no one to guard you. But the risk is great, *chico*, for we may all be shot or captured. That is the risk we take—but there is no need for *you* to do so. If you were caught with us you would be sent to the *carcel* as well. We have been talking the matter over, and thought it best to ask you to come along as far as the mountain pass, and then one of us could see you on the road to Fuentarabia, where you could cross into France."

I again expressed my desire to go, but not to leave them, for I wished very much to see the wonderful dogs that carry the contraband across the line.

"*Bueno*," said my friend at last.

"It shall be as you wish; but blame only yourself if you spend many years in prison."

I was not to be frightened off, and said so.

The innkeeper still seemed dubious, and left me, promising to take counsel with his men.

On the afternoon of my third day in hiding, as I was

looking from my window, I saw two of the police in their picturesque uniform and wide, two-winged hats pass along the street, carbine in hand. I hastily drew back, and, watching from behind a shutter, I saw them stop an old man and question him. A little later Lagartillo came up to my room and threw a bundle of clothes on the floor.

"Señor, you saw them? They ask if we have seen a Frenchman. They expect us to say, 'No, but we have an *Ingles* here.' One of their little tricks. Well, put on these clothes, *amigo*, and to-night you must come with us. We cannot leave you here to be caught. You have your wish, for it is a big party of smugglers we go to meet. Do not blame me if you have more excitement than is good for you."

Overjoyed, I unrolled the bundle. It contained a complete suit, with white, rope-soled shoes and a black hat, together with the long black cape worn in the mountains, which is used as a greatcoat by day, a blanket by night, and also as a means of disguise for the face, for when a corner is thrown over one shoulder it hides all but the eyes.

I picked up the clothes and put them on in place of my own. I also took the precaution of taking all my money with me. In one of the pockets I found a *navaja*—the fighting knife of the Spaniards. Evidently Lagartillo had thought the outfit incomplete without it.

It was quite dark when the *padrone*, as I had heard the others call Lagartillo, came to fetch me. We walked noiselessly down the main street, and turned into the yard of a farm where a string of mules, apparently heavy laden with produce, wine jars, etc., were ready to start, and so several men who were to lead them. I found that

the produce was merely a blind, in case we were stopped.

With a guttural "Ahree!" the mules were started, and we were soon climbing the path through the trees growing at the base of the mountains.

After two hours' steady climbing we halted, and several shadowy forms, almost invisible in their black capes, stepped out from among the trees and spoke to us. I was heartily glad of the short rest, for already I was weary and spent. Lagartillo came and held a bottle to my lips, which contained strong spirits. He whispered to me that I had better mount one of the beasts, as all packs were being left behind here. I was glad of the offer, and for the rest of the night I held on automatically, dozing and waking by fits and starts.

When the dawn came we were in a wild mountain gorge. Steep rocks were on every side, from which there was no visible outlet. I could see by the stunted vegetation that we were already at a high altitude. Here camp was made and blankets spread, but, of course, no fires were lighted. After a cold meal I fell soundly asleep.

When I awoke it was late afternoon, and the men were all busy playing cards and smoking. After a sup of wine and some bread and goat's milk cheese, I got up and walked to where I saw Lagartillo talking earnestly to a small, bearded man, who had evidently only just then arrived. Lagartillo introduced me as *El Ingles*, and told me that this man was Ramon, the dog-master. He trained the dogs, and they obeyed him implicitly.

These animals are as big as a collie, but have much shorter hair; in fact, their coats are clipped quite short to prevent them from catching in the barbed wire.

Along the whole of the frontier between France and Spain run a series of fences twenty feet high, made of

wire netting and barbed wire. A man cannot possibly get through, for along the top of the fence are bells and electric signals, and the whole front is patrolled by the *Guardias Civiles*, armed with carbines.

Two of these men—for they always go in pairs—have charge of about five miles of fence. They are all dead shots, and no man, unless he wishes to die, would think of disobeying their orders to halt. The smuggler dogs are let loose on the French side, carrying, strapped to them, the goods to be smuggled through.

They are trained to creep slowly forward until they get to certain spots, where loose earth or rocks and small runways, prepared for them and hidden by bushes, allow them to pass. They are so clever that, no matter what happens, they never touch the netting nor ring the bells.

Of course, the frontier guards shoot these dogs on sight. Therefore they have been trained to avoid any uniformed person. Generally they cross in single file, a distance of about five hundred yards between each animal. The leader, who understands the danger of his calling thoroughly, advances warily, eyes and ears alert for a sign of his foes. If he senses the presence of a guard he drops to the ground, hiding in the grass or behind a bush; the next dog does the same, and at his disappearance the next also, until the whole line is motionless. They will lie thus until the first dog rises again and dashes forward.

They never bark. A low whine is the only sound they make, as a warning, when they reach the smugglers waiting for them.

At dusk we broke camp and climbed up a small path winding among the rocks, some of the men remaining

to look after the mules. Slowly we advanced until Ramon told us to stop. Here we took up our positions, crouching behind rocks and trees. Not a word was spoken. Every man knew what to do, and we were now within half a mile of the fences. Ramon, the dog-master, produced a piece of rope from his pocket, to which he tied a cloth that he had soaked in some pungent mixture. Crawling slowly forward, he dragged this over the ground behind him, and then, rising, he disappeared. Lagartillo whispered to me that he had gone to lay the scent parallel with the fences. After about an hour I saw him come back, crawling from rock to rock.

We then waited for the dark. The night had been well chosen, for there was no moon, but about ten, as I judged it, something rustled in the grass in front of us, and at a soft word from Ramon a large black dog crawled towards him with a low whine. It was a beautiful animal, with large eyes faintly shining in the dark. After feeling around its collar, Ramon said, "Twenty dogs are coming." They came, one by one, and as soon as they were within grasp the contraband was removed and the dog-master leashed them. Hardly had the twentieth arrived when he rose, and made for the path leading to the mules. We were about to follow when another dog ran towards us, barking furiously, followed by a rush of men in uniform. We were caught !

With a yell Lagartillo started up and shouted to Ramon, "Save the dogs, *amigo*—save our brave dogs" ; then, without a moment's hesitation, he rushed towards the frontier guards, followed by some of the men, while others ran after the dogs. What followed was like a nightmare. Carbines barked, knives flashed in the rays

of the lanterns carried by the guards, and a terrible mêlée ensued. Twice I saw my friend stagger as the carbines cracked, and then he was amongst them.

After it was all over, and we were all cruelly bound, I saw the huge form of Lagartillo on the ground, dead, and under him two guards, one also dead, the other wounded. Tears came to my eyes for my friend. Here was a man—a real man! He had given his life to save the dogs!

Twelve, including myself, were roped up and surrounded by the police. We marched through the night and part of the morning till I wished I were as Lagartillo. It was ten in the morning before we arrived at Berga, where the detachment was stationed. There we were brought before the chief of the detachment, who questioned us one by one, after his men had searched us carefully.

When my turn came they found only the knife and my money. My papers were all at the inn, and I could not ask for them without giving the wives and relatives of my smuggler friends away. My money, a huge sum for the place—over two thousand pesetas (£100)—caused a gasp of astonishment, and I was asked where I got it from. No sooner had I begun to explain when the chief said, "Ah! the French agent. The very man we want. Take him away."

I now bitterly rued my rashness in putting myself in such a position, but it was too late to repine, and so I could only grit my teeth and make the best of it. I was given a receipt for my money by the chief, and told that I could buy what I wanted with it in the way of food and sundries, but that I had better wait before ordering furniture until I got to the gaol at Huelcos, as I should

want it there—adding, with a grin, that I should probably be there a long time.

The other men who had been captured with me were also being taken to Huelcos, and they had no friends there, which is a terrible thing in Spain, for a prisoner can claim nothing from the authorities but dry bread and water.

Late on the same day we were again fettered and marched off, a chain running from man to man and locked to his handcuffs. We trudged wearily from lock-up to lock-up for two days, till we reached Huelcos, where we were formally consigned to the local gaol, called a *carcel*.

I was told that, since I had money, I could be alone, but obtained permission from the gaoler that we should all be put together in a large cell, and gave my orders for blankets and straw mattresses for each of us, also for food and wine. A price-list was brought me, on which was a list of the extras. What gave me the greatest shock was that the hire of bedding was reckoned per six months.

Now began a weary time of waiting. Although the gaoler was willing enough that I should spend my money—naturally, since his wife exploited the prisoners' canteen—he turned a deaf ear to all my requests that a letter should be taken to the nearest British Consul. I was not allowed to write or communicate with anyone. Time enough, I was told, to do that when we should be taken before the *juez de guardia* (the magistrate) to be questioned. When I asked how long we should have to wait before a trial, he shrugged his shoulders and answered, "Why worry about that? You are allowed to eat and drink what you like here, whereas, once

sentenced, you will have to work in the mines." Many were the devices we invented to pass the time, although cards and gambling were the chief of these.

A great hardship was that, although we were allowed cigarettes and tobacco, there were no matches, because sometimes the prisoners deliberately set fire to the building in order to try and escape. Also the wine and water we received were always in goatskins; no glass of any kind entered the cells.

I finally hit on a trick for obtaining a light for our cigarettes that worked splendidly.

After thinking hard how to produce fire, I obtained a small pebble when we went out to our usual morning's exercise in the prison grounds. There were plenty of these about, and they were all of the flint variety. I then cut a button from my breeches. On the clothes the mountaineers wear, these are always just a round piece of steel, cup-shaped and perforated by two holes. This button I threaded on a thin piece of twine.

During the hour we were allowed for exercise, smoking was permitted, and the warder in charge of us gave us lighted spills. Tearing up a handkerchief, I charred this, making tinder.

Once back in our cell, I held one end of the twine in my teeth, and by twisting it and then pulling on the other end caused the button to spin. Approaching the flint to the rim, I had the satisfaction of seeing a stream of sparks fly from it that soon set the tinder aglow. After this we smoked to our hearts' content.

The warders could not understand why we lost so many buttons, that had to be constantly replaced, for these did not last for more than two days before being worn down and becoming useless as spark producers.

The months passed on leaden feet, and soon fights and quarrels arose among my companions. Little by little I again became an alien to them, and I believe that their superstitious natures held me to be the cause of the disaster which had befallen them. At last I had to request to be placed in a cell by myself. Now, of course, the loneliness became dreadful, but it was better than the constant quarrelling.

One evening—well remembered, be sure—the chief gaoler came to my door with a mysterious air. After a few commonplaces he glanced around him, and then slipped a piece of paper into my hand.

“This came for you some days ago, señor, but I could not give it to you whilst you were with the others.”

Eagerly I unfolded the message. It was short, but with the first words a ray of hope came to me.

“POBRE AMIGO,—I have learned of your misfortune. How can I help?”

“CONCHITA.”

I will confess it without shame—with these few friendly words, the first I had received for months, a lump came into my throat, and, throwing myself on my bed, I sobbed like a weakling. How I yearned for the sunshine, the sweet scent of the pines, the open, freedom!

Seeing me overcome, the *carcelero* had discreetly withdrawn.

When he came back a little later I had regained my composure.

“Shall I take an answer?” he said.

I eagerly assented. He handed me a stump of pencil and a piece of paper.

Feverishly I scribbled a reply, pouring out my thanks. I begged her to come and visit me if she could, but, failing that, to go to the British Consul and request him to intervene, explaining matters to him.

Before taking this note I had to write an order for five hundred pesetas on the money held for me at the prison—to pay for furniture, the gaoler advised me to say ; thus they would give him the sum required.

I did not feel like haggling over the price for carrying my letter, which proved to be the price of my liberty.

Two days later another note came to me :

"QUERIDO,—I have explained everything to *el Señor Consul*. He has your papers, which I fetched for him. *Pobre Lagartillo* was buried in the mountains he loved.

"I shall be waiting at Casas Rojas until you are free. I am at the house of Doña Fernandez, whose husband is there with you.

"*Hasta la vista,*

"CONCHITA."

Then came further days of waiting. Every time the key grated in the door of my cell I sprang up with beating heart. Alas ! Spain is the country of *mañana*—to-morrow. Two weeks passed slowly, before one evening, when I had almost given up hope, I heard voices outside my door ; then the most beautiful sound in the world—an English voice—and the Consul's secretary came in.

After severely scolding me for having placed myself in such a position, he told me that, thanks to Monsieur Blanchard's influence, who had hurriedly telegraphed to Madrid on hearing what had befallen me, I was to be

released at once, but on condition that I should immediately leave Spain, and that to avoid long formalities he had undertaken to conduct me to Cerbere—the frontier. I flatly refused to go unless he allowed me to pass through Casas Rojas to see Conchita. After some demur he consented.

“She is a fine lassie,” he said, “and you owe your freedom to her, so I suppose I must give way—but you will have to continue with me at once.”

Then at last the formalities of release were gone through. My knife was actually returned to me. I have it still. Of my money there was not much left, for a bill that resembled that of a seaside landlady was handed to me. I requested the *carcelero* to give the things I had bought to the imprisoned smugglers, and also left them the remainder of the money; keeping enough only to enable me to reach Paris. Thus, at long last, I passed through the heavy iron gates—out into the world once more.

.
The next evening I reached the village where I first met Lagartillo. Brave and beautiful Conchita kissed me and cried over me, and for an hour we whispered sweet nothings and vowed eternal love.

She promised to wait for me until I could obtain the right to return to Spain and claim her.

Poor Conchita! I never saw her again. She was killed a month later by Pedro, who stabbed her and then shot himself.

.
The smugglers were all sent to prison. I could do nothing for them except to pay for a first-class lawyer to defend them, which I did.

Of my journey to Paris I remember very little, for I was heartbroken at having to leave my sweet Conchita. I reported myself to Monsieur Dufresne on my arrival. He looked curiously at my haggard face, but refrained from the obvious remark. He only laid his hand on my shoulder and said, "Better with the hounds than with the hares, believe me, who am old. Come to me next week and I will introduce you to your colleagues. The best thing for effacing painful memories is work, and I have plenty for you."

“LA GLU,” APACHE AND GENTLEMAN

CHAPTER IV

“LA GLU,” APACHE AND GENTLEMAN

SOME eighteen years have now elapsed, and I think I may safely disclose the truth regarding that desperate bandit and Parisian apache known as “La Glu,” who lingered for many years in the gloomy French prison of Fresnes, and was finally sent to Noumea, in French Guiana, there to die.

Many will remember that at the time of his trial, which lasted nearly ten days, there was a rumour in the French papers that his identity was being withheld—that his name was neither Raoul Pontier nor John Ainsworth, and that he was in reality a Scotsman, and the son of a well-known family in the north.

This rumour got into the British papers also, but was contradicted and suppressed. As Raoul Pontier, *alias* John Ainsworth, he was sentenced to be guillotined for being concerned in the disappearance and presumable death of James White of Liverpool (White’s body was not found, but he was never heard of again), for the murder of old Miss Fergusson, and for being concerned in the mysterious disappearance and presumed murder of a young American girl, Lucy van Bhurgen, of New York.

His reprieve was signed by President Loubet, and his sentence commuted to imprisonment for life in one of the French penal settlements. It was again said by the *Matin* and other papers that family influence had been at work, and that this reprieve had been granted

in deference to the honour of an aristocratic family whose name was already famous in the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie.

After a few days of dreadful notoriety he was forgotten, and only a brief paragraph at the outbreak of the war said that he made a request to be allowed to enter the Foreign Legion so that he might fight the Boche. This was refused when Joffre said, "I will win without the help of the prison scum."

No one seems to have noticed the slip. Foreign Legion! Why should a French apache join the Foreign Legion? However, at that awful moment, when the Germans were driving all before them, no attention was paid to this. I am one of the few alive who know the truth, but neither am I going to cause more sorrow and heartache to a grand old Scottish family and to a sweet, white-haired lady, who still mourns the loss of a son whom she only wishes to think of as the curly-haired, headstrong lad she was wont to play with in his schooldays.

.

After my experience in Spain I arrived in Paris glad to get back again to a city of music and laughter. A few days' rest restored me somewhat, and I made haste to call on my friend, Monsieur Dufresne, who appeared delighted to see me. I told him that I now wished to settle down in Paris and make a position there for myself.

"The very thing for you to do," he said eagerly. "Paris is the heart of the world. More things happen here than anywhere else.

"I mean by that, more things of an international or cosmopolitan character, where such a man as yourself will be constantly useful.

“You shall go along soon to the Etoile and see Dr. Bertillon. I am sure that you will be interested in his work. For the moment I want you to call on Mr. Bannister, of the famous American detective agency.

“He was here yesterday, and requested us to send someone along who speaks French and English perfectly. I told him about you, and he is waiting for you to call at his office in the Rue Scribe. He stipulated it should be someone who is neither too French nor too typically English in appearance, but who might be either. You are the only man I know conforming to these conditions. Go and see him at once.

“*Voilà*, I have written a letter vouching for you. Here it is. Sit down while I complete it.” I did so.

Monsieur Dufresne scribbled busily for a moment, and then sealed the letter with the official stamp. I looked at the address when it was handed to me : 3 Rue Scribe. I knew the place well.

“Go there now, and report to me when he has told you what he wants. From what I have heard I think that it is what you call a mare’s nest, *hein* ? Something that does not exist. However, we like to oblige Bannister for he always helps us when it is anything to do with American criminals. I will telephone and tell him that you are on your way. *Au revoir* !”

I walked quickly to the Place du Chatelet and jumped on an omnibus that put me down twenty minutes later at the Opéra, only a short walk from the Rue Scribe. I went to the office at No. 3 and was asked to wait, as Mr. Bannister was engaged. I had been there but a few minutes when a middle-aged Frenchman came in and sat down. After a few commonplaces we began chatting about a play that at the time was drawing all Paris to

the Vaudeville. The clerk who had shown me in, then came and requested the Frenchman to follow him into an inner office. Five minutes later a well-dressed American about thirty came out and called me, introducing himself as James P. Bannister. I handed him the letter from Dufresne, and sat down while he read it. I think we conceived a mutual liking for each other, for we were soon very friendly. Bannister at once settled down to explain matters to me.

He told me his chief in New York had instructed him to find out what had become of a young American girl named Lucy van Bhurgen, the youngest daughter of a very wealthy and well-known New York family.

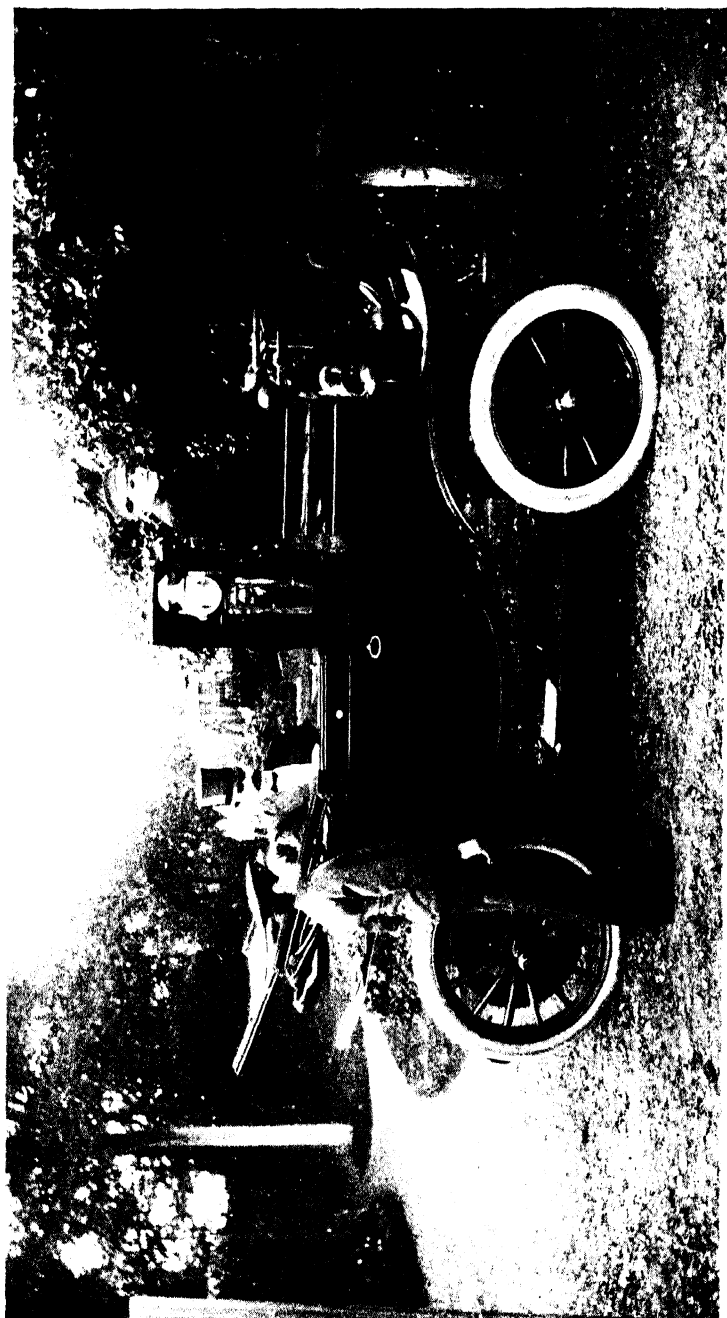
She had come to Paris to study art, but her taste for the strange and bizarre had led her to frequent the fast Bohemian circles. She had been seen very often with a well-known young Englishman who was a member of the Sports Club and other exclusive clubs. Then suddenly she had disappeared, and nothing further had been heard of her.

Her father was an invalid who could not travel, and so finally, in their despair, the family had decided to instruct Bannister's agency to search for her. It had been ascertained, through the willing assistance of the French Sûreté, that she had drawn heavily on her bank account in the last few days before her disappearance, though why she had done so was a mystery.

Several people had been questioned, and had admitted having seen her at the Longchamps races and other popular places in the company of this young Englishman. His name was John Ainsworth. But it was also shown that he had been away at Aix-les-Bains during the week when she left her sumptuous flat never to return. The



1. Lemoine, the diamond maker.
2. The power house that supplied the electric current for Lemoine's furnaces.
3. The stream where I forced my two friends to lie in the water to destroy the effect of the Wourali poison.
4. The path leading to the Hacienda Miriam.



ASHTON WOULD IN HIS ELECTRIC BROTHAM, WITH JULES BONNOT AT THE STEERING-WHEEL.

Sûreté thought that a love adventure was the explanation, but Bannister did not think so.

One Dupont, a *sergent de ville*, or policeman, stated in his usual daily report that he had seen an elegantly dressed woman, talking volubly in English to her male companion, who was in evening dress, enter the haunt known as Le Lapin Rouge. He had then telephoned for a colleague who could guard them against accident in this place, since he could not leave his post, but the couple had left together after only a short stay, and so he had merely reported the fact.

Bannister did not explain what methods he had employed, but said that he suspected this John Ainsworth of leading a very fast life, and of not being what he seemed.

“Now come into my study,” Bannister added, after explaining all this. “I will see if you are any good at a quick change.” Rising, he led me into a room adjoining his office, that looked for all the world like a coiffeur’s or manicurist’s parlour. Mirrors, brushes, wigs, and grease-paint strewed the tables, and hundreds of photographs covered the walls. I must have looked my thoughts, for he smiled, and said, “Yes, most people think that disguise and making up are a thing of the past, but I have my own methods.”

Hanging in one corner were the clothes and hat I had seen the Frenchman wear who had entered the office before me. Pointing to them, I said :

“He was one of your men, then ? ”

Bannister smiled and nodded, then said : “Turn round a moment and look at that picture. That is John Ainsworth.” I looked at the picture on the wall, but could not believe it to be that of an Englishman.

I wheeled round to say so, and stood dumbfounded. Before me was the Frenchman again !

I complimented Bannister on his art, which seemed to please him.

“ You see,” he said, “ I wanted to see what you looked like first, and chiefly I wished to hear you speak French. I am more than pleased with both your appearance and your absolutely perfect French.

“ Now you must learn to alter your appearance. It may seem a carnival masquerade to you at first, but I assure you that it’s a valuable asset to be able to follow or watch a man without being recognised.”

“ But,” I objected, “ none of the men of the Sûreté do it ! Nor any of the Scotland Yard people.”

“ No, nor do the regular forces in the States. Shall I tell you why ? Because they have dozens of men at their disposal, and, if one is too well known, they take him off the case and send another. We, who have not an unlimited staff, and play a lone hand most of the time, have to split ourselves up into many persons.”

For some days I underwent a series of lessons and quick changes until I was able to transform myself into a passable loafer, apache, or a cab-driver, though I was inwardly sceptical of such showy methods.

One morning I found Bannister very elated. I was told to go to the Sports Club at five that day, where I should meet this John Ainsworth, who had returned to Paris. His photograph was given to me. I was to try and attract his attention by a foolish aping of the manners of a young aristocrat with more money than brains, and in Paris for the first time. My French was to be the usual college French, and my membership card bore the name of the Hon. Frank Hargreaves.

I did as I was told, and if I looked half as foolish as I felt I must have created the desired impression. There were several young Englishmen there, who were highly amused at my disparaging remarks about Paris. I managed to take a hand in a game of baccarat going on, for in Paris most clubs are merely gambling-rooms disguised, and towards six I saw with a thrill that the man I was there to watch had come into the card-room.

I recognised him at once. He was not very tall, but tremendously broad-shouldered and deep-chested. His face was clean-shaven and regular in features—nothing to give any other impression but that here was a gentleman. His hair was auburn—not red; more like mahogany. His step was firm, and his foot small. The only thing peculiar about him was the queer mobility of his eyes.

I did my best to get friendly with some of the youngsters I met there, and finally invited several of them to dine with me that evening.

I inquired which was the best restaurant to go to, since I was supposed to be a stranger there. One of my new-found friends suggested Maxim's, but Ainsworth, who had heard what was said, drawled, “Nonsense! No one goes there now. Try Larue. You'll find him very good. I often go there.”

That was what I wanted. I took advantage of the opening, and, after one of the young men had introduced us, asked him if he would also dine with us that evening. He declined, however, saying that he had made other plans. The dinner was a great success, and during the coffee period I was pleased to see Ainsworth come in with several people, with whom he partook of a light

meal, followed by several bottles of wine. He nodded pleasantly to us, and came over and shook hands.

I thanked him for telling me of so excellent a restaurant, and said that I hoped to see more of him, as I felt in need of a cicerone as able as he seemed to be. He nodded at this. "Yes, you want someone to show you round and keep you out of mischief. I can see that. Well, I'll probably be at the Club de Boxe to-morrow at about 4 p.m., for I am backing Sam Langford in his coming fight with Sam M'Vea, and I want to see him spar. Would you like to come?" I thanked him, and at four the next day I went to the well-known boxing club of which I had often heard.

In the gymnasium I found my new acquaintance.

Langford, who was then much talked of as the coming champion, was already busy with his sparring partners, and, as I am a lover of the noble art, I became immediately absorbed in his work.

After two partners had been settled, and had left the ring more or less knocked about, Ainsworth, who seemed on intimate terms with everyone present, expressed the desire to have a bout with Langford. This the negro agreed to, and in a few minutes Ainsworth appeared in fighting trim. I saw then that my opinion of him had been correct, and that he was a tremendously powerful fellow, though too broad-shouldered to be symmetrical. To my surprise, Ainsworth strode up to the other man quite masterfully, although the negro was a terrific fighter, and I was struck by the Englishman's catlike agility on his feet. Suddenly he dropped his arms, and, untying his left glove, he showed a badly sprained thumb. "Your head is too hard, tar baby," was his comment to Sam Langford, who was nicknamed the Tar Baby.

I reported all that had passed to Bannister, who listened to my detailed story without comment.

When I had finished he leaned back in his chair lost in thought for a few minutes. Finally, he said :

“ You will no doubt be wondering what all this leads to. Well, I am not quite certain myself as to what the meaning of it all is, but I dimly begin to conceive a monstrous theory. Until I am sure I’ll keep that to myself, for I have no proof as yet that I am right. I will, however, give you a résumé of the actual facts in my possession.

“ In the last three years I have received reports from our New York headquarters of several crimes that appear to have been committed by the same man. They were all characterised by an inhuman cruelty and animal-like ferocity. Also the methods employed were singularly un-American, savouring more of the French apache. You have heard, I suppose, of the Chauffeurs? ”

“ You mean those awful Thugs who attack farms and lonely country houses, and who make their victims reveal the hiding-place of their money by roasting their bare feet over red-hot coals? ”

“ Yes, that is why the French call them Chauffeurs—a word which, until it was applied to motor-drivers, meant ‘ those who use heat.’ Well, these crimes in the States were of that kind. Lonely country-folk were overpowered and tortured by fire. But the crimes that I am specially referring to were the kidnapping of young girls and holding them for ransom. If the sum demanded was not forthcoming at once, the custom of the Chauffeurs was resorted to. Their victims died in awful agony.

“ The police were able to question one of the poor girls before she died. The description she gave of the masked

leader—for there were several men in the house where she had been kept a prisoner—tallied strangely with that of a well-known man-about-town named McFarlane, to whom she had been engaged. He disappeared suddenly, and the New York police failed to trace him. They believe that he has left America. One peculiarity of the man in question was that, when he became animated or angry, his eyes showed a pronounced independent mobility—a species of squint. Only when he was excited however. Now, we have lately had several crimes in France that were also very mysterious and gruesome.

“ One was the death of Charles Harcourt, an English jockey, who frequented the various gambling-clubs and who was noted for being a miser.

“ His feet, when he was found, were completely charred.

“ Then there is the disappearance of White, the Liverpool man. No trace of him has ever been discovered. Now, last of all, is the disappearance of Lucy van Bhurgen.

“ The French police suspect a man, infamous in all truth, but whom until now they have never been able to arrest. I am speaking of that terrible apache ‘ La Glu.’ You have heard of him ? ”

I nodded. Who had not heard of this tiger in human shape ?

The mention of his name at night made people shudder. He was to Paris what Jack the Ripper had been to London, and his victims, too, had nearly all been women.

“ Now,” continued Bannister, “ I have certain information, which I have kept to myself, which proves that Ainsworth is in the habit of often going to low taverns where the apaches meet. Also, not many weeks ago, ‘ La Glu ’ was seen and chased by the cycle police.

He finally disappeared into a house in the Avenue Wagram. The house was surrounded and searched, but no trace of the apache discovered. The house was that in which Ainsworth lives.”

“ You mean,” I cried, “ that you think Ainsworth and ‘ La Glu ’ are friends ? ”

“ Say accomplices rather, and you will be nearer the truth.”

“ But why ? Ainsworth is rich and a gentleman. What reasons could he have for harbouring such a beast ? ”

“ God knows ! It may be blackmail. Some youthful folly of the Englishman. Or it may be an abnormal love of crime and cruelty. Such things have been known.”

“ But you suspect Ainsworth of having been mixed up in similar horrors in the States ? Where does the apache come into the plot ? ”

“ That’s it ! ‘ La Glu ’ is known to have been away from Paris just at the time when those things happened over there, and he then mysteriously once more appeared at his old haunts. They may have met in America.”

“ I did not know that French criminals of that type ever travelled.”

“ No, they do not ; but where was he if not abroad ? For no one saw him in France until he suddenly turned up again. Also, as I mentioned, the manner of those crimes in America was typically French. Now you see why I wanted you to practise making up, and why I needed someone who can speak both languages. You must watch Ainsworth and also try and find ‘ La Glu.’ I speak French well, but I do not know the *argot*—the slang of the Parisian bandit—whereas you say you do, though heaven alone knows where you learned it.

"There is also another reason why I want you to investigate the seamy side of Ainsworth's life, and also to try and find 'La Glu.'

"Now, you say you have an appointment with the Englishman at the Cercle Taitbout to-night. They play baccarat for high stakes there. See how Ainsworth plays—and, if he loses, whether he seems to mind. I have an idea that he is not as wealthy as he appears to be. Telephone me if he invites you to go anywhere else! If he leaves alone, try and follow, but take a cab. Don't, whatever you do, let him see you following." After some further instructions Bannister and I parted.

I went to the Cercle Taitbout that evening.

When I arrived Ainsworth was at the baccarat-table, and I saw that play was high. I waited my chance, and when the bank was auctioned I obtained it. Finally Ainsworth took the bank, and lost heavily. At last he got up, and, with a scowl which he turned into a smile when he saw I was watching him, called for a bottle of Pommery.

"I ought never to play," he confessed. "I always lose."

We left the Cercle together. Ainsworth suggested a visit to the Halles. This used to be the regular thing; to go to the disreputable parts of Paris, where the night-prowlers abound and sup there in the company of the scum of the outer boulevards.

He conducted me to the very worst of these haunts—a cellar tavern called *Le Lapin Rouge*—The Red Rabbit. In it were about twenty men and women, drinking wine and brandy, smoking, quarrelling, and dancing, but a momentary silence fell as we stumbled from the ill-lit cellar stairs into the foul place. The reek of stale wine

nearly overcame me, and for a second I was inclined to back out.

We did not stay long, and I for one was glad to get out alive into the fresh air. I saw with relief the shadowy forms of two *agents de police* patrolling the streets. Anyway, outside, if not down there, law and order still prevailed.

Calling a *fiacre*, Ainsworth asked me if I cared to accompany him home, adding that he had just bought a case of whisky on which he would like my opinion. So for the first time I entered that house in the Avenue Wagram of which Bannister had spoken. It was a fine building that indicated the wealth of its inmates. The *appartement* Ainsworth occupied was on the top floor. He preferred to be high up, he said, as there was less noise and more air.

This *appartement* was sumptuously furnished. In his library, where we went to sample his whisky, the walls were adorned with photographs of famous boxers. Evidently he was a keen admirer of the modern gladiator. I said as much to him. “No,” he answered, “I don’t think it’s the science of boxing so much as the fight itself that I like to watch. A fight of any kind always thrills me. Probably I am a throw-back.” Later these words were to occur to me as being the true explanation of this man’s nature. If I believed in the perpetual reincarnation of the followers of Buddha, I could easily imagine him to have once been the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, Torquemada.

Our conversation was on various topics after this. I finally led it round to famous murders, following a theory of my own. Ainsworth, who until then had been languid and listless, at once became alert and animated.

I listened eagerly to my host as he warmed to his subject, although an inward horror grew in me. The man knew all the notorious crimes of violence of the last century by heart. When I pretended to doubt some of his statements he proved his intimate knowledge of the subject by quoting dates and names, and even pulled out some of his books. His library, as I now saw, dealt with only one theme—bloodshed! As his excitement grew, so did that slight peculiarity I had noticed, until his eyes rolled in their sockets independently, like a chameleon's. Sick with loathing, I left him gloating over some dreadful pictures of Chinese torture. I knew now what Bannister suspected; the man was a monomaniac, insane, as many men are insane, on one subject, although otherwise normal.

I felt certain that this man really sought the company of such brutes as "La Glu" because of this warp in his brain, and that it was more than probable that he actually had assisted, if only as spectator, at some of the dreadful blood orgies Bannister had described. Only we had no proof of this as yet.

I breathed deeply of the cool night air as I stepped into the street. At the corner a voice hailed me from the dark interior of a stationary cab. It was Bannister, who, true to his promise, had arrived in accordance with my prearranged telephone message, and had followed us from the Lapin Rouge. I took my place by his side, and in silence we drove to the Rue Scribe.

Once there, I related the events of the evening. I did not tell him that in my pocket, in a special case I had for that purpose, was a card Ainsworth had handed to me. I intended to go with it to the Sûreté laboratory and enlarge the finger-prints I knew I had obtained. I had

an idea, of which I did not wish to inform anyone for the moment. It was too late to do anything that night when I left Bannister, but I made an appointment for the next day.

I spent an interesting morning with Monsieur Dufresne. The print of a thumb and two fingers came out quite clearly under the new process I had perfected, and these were photographed and enlarged. All our searches were in vain. In the records there were none like them. Copies were at once sent to America. I made a full report to Monsieur Dufresne, and handed in a description of Ainsworth to Dr. Bertillon's department. I also told my chief what I suspected to be the true explanation. He was friendly, but incredulous. I could see that he imagined my wish to distinguish myself to be the reason for my theory.

That day a murder was discovered in the Rue Le Peletier. No doubt many will remember that an old English lady, Miss Fergusson, who had been well known in French society as a philanthropist, was found dead in her flat at No. 19. When the police broke into the place the poor soul was discovered sitting tied in a chair, with her bare feet bound to a stove, in which a fire was still burning. I will pass over the details, which at the time caused a sensation. A secret cupboard in the wall had been forced. No money was found, although she was known to have been wealthy. Although every article likely to have been touched was carefully treated and photographed, it was apparent by the absence of any print that the murderer had worn gloves. A button from one of them was found by her side—a grey bone glove-button. After a long and patient investigation the maker of these buttons, and the firms who sold gloves

having these buttons, were traced, but there the search ended.

Now, however, the hunt was up.

That same evening several dens of the kind likely to be frequented by the criminal were raided. The Sûreté were convinced that an apache had committed the crime. No one seemed to have noticed how unlikely it was that a low-class criminal would think of wearing gloves in order to leave no finger-prints.

Since the regulars would take no notice of my theory I had to go to Bannister. I found him very excited about the news.

I showed him the button, which I had with me.

He looked at me searchingly.

"Well?" was all he said, with that queer expression on his face.

I smiled. "You and I have come to the same conclusion."

"And that is?"

"That Ainsworth and 'La Glu' are one!"

Bannister jumped to his feet.

"By God! that is just what I think Ashton-Wolfe. What caused you to suspect this monstrous fact?"

"Why, I already dimly felt it, but—then this old lady—an Englishwoman—How do they imagine an apache gained an entrance to her flat in a house like No. 19 Rue Le Peletier in broad daylight? No door was forced, no window either. She must have admitted him; therefore she must have known him. Also, there was no reason for killing her, once he had discovered where her money was hidden, unless she could have told the police who it was had robbed her."

"Why do you say in broad daylight?"

"Obviously. The fire was still alight, but only a little of the coal in the room had been used."

"H'm!" Bannister said. "You have a great gift for observing details. But your deduction is sound. Now, what do you propose?"

"We must go to the house in the Avenue Wagram—after making sure that this monster is out—and search it. Also I will go and try to get the apache's finger-prints. I already have those of Ainsworth."

"You have?" my friend shouted. "That's fine. But the Sûreté will never give us a search-warrant!"

"No, nor do we want to go there officially, or we would find nothing. We must go without anyone knowing. Have you a man who can open a door?"

"Sure! I can," said Bannister. "Most locks are easy to me."

That afternoon I called on Ainsworth as the Hon. Hargreaves, and was told by the concierge that he was away. Had gone away for several days, in fact. I asked if he had mentioned when he would return. "No," she answered, "but I think he has gone to Vichy. His letters are to be sent there, poste restante, until he wires to say that he is returning."

"Another alibi," was Bannister's comment when I told him.

"I'm sure he is in Paris all the time. We shall have to be careful."

As soon as it was dark we went to the house. An employee of Bannister kept the concierge in conversation while we slipped upstairs. We soon opened the door and entered the flat on the top floor. On tiptoe we went from room to room, fully expecting to find our man hiding there, but the place was empty. We found nothing that

could help us in any way. Just as we were going, bitterly disappointed at our fiasco, I happened to notice that several of the books on one of the shelves had been put back upside down. Now, I have made it a rule never to neglect investigating anything that is unusual. I said so to my companion, and we pulled out these volumes. Behind them we found a lock. Hastily piling all the remaining books on to the floor, we had the satisfaction of assuring ourselves that behind the bookcase was a steel or iron door—steel, I thought, by the sound when we tapped it. No doubt when the right key was inserted the whole arrangement of door and bookcase would swing open. We had no means of verifying this, for the lock was a highly complicated combination safe lock.

I suggested that we had better investigate from the back or the roof, and so we replaced the books, taking care to put the volumes back in their original position—upside down. It might have been done purposely by the owner ; one never knows.

“ I guess that’s Bluebeard’s chamber,” said Bannister as we left. “ If we could only get in there we’d have him.”

“ What’s the next move ? ” I asked.

“ Well, I think it should be an investigation from the other end. I’d like you to see if you can get on the track of the apache. I’ll examine the houses in the next street. It stands to reason that he gets in and out from the back when he returns from his nocturnal expeditions. He then changes in what is certainly a room behind that steel door, and steps into his library as the gentleman of means.”

It was arranged that I should dress as a French sailor

home on leave, and so go unmolested to some of the taverns of bad repute.

My first visit was to the Halles, and there I went from place to place. I ought to have known better, since these places had been raided. I saw that in each were one or two of Dufresne's men, and, naturally enough, no one else of any importance.

I then bethought myself of a place called Chez Emile. I searched for it for some time, and finally asked an *agent de police* where it was. He looked at me searchingly when I mentioned the name. “*Nom de nom, petit*, what do you want to go there for? Are you tired of life?” I explained that I was curious to see what it was like, and that perhaps I should meet some friends there. “Friends? Well, then you must be a nice specimen,” he growled. “I think you had better come to see the *commissaire*. We want to know what kind of sailor it is has friends at Emile's.”

Too late I remembered that I was supposed to be a sailor of the Republic. There was nothing else to be done, so I showed him my badge. He whistled when he saw it.

“You mean you are going alone? Is no one with you? No. Well, then, monsieur, let me warn you, you'll not come out alive if they guess who you are. Better let me tell my colleagues at that end.” I did not want any bodyguard, however, and said so. I left him shaking his head at what he considered my folly.

I found Emile's in a little back street and down the usual cellar stairs. I staggered slightly in my walk, as if tipsy, as I got to the door, and, pushing it open, entered a place much like the others, but much bigger. There were only four or five men in a corner engaged in a low-voiced

conversation. Rolling up to the zinc counter, I asked the *bistro* in a hoarse voice for a *demi-setier*—half a bottle of wine.

I paid for it, and, carrying it to a table on which were some glasses, sat down heavily. Seeing the men watching me, I made a pretence of eagerly drinking. It tasted like ink, and I could not repress a fit of coughing.

"Too strong, eh, *maturin* [sailor]? You don't seem used to good wine," said one of them, walking up to me and showing his broken teeth in an evil grin.

"Strong?" I said. "I am used to rum. This stuff is water."

"Well, then you must have some rum." With a sweep of his hand he knocked the bottle off the table and called for two glasses of rum. I shall never forget the sickening horror I felt at that moment, for when this foul brute knocked the bottle off the table I noticed that he had a swollen, inflamed thumb.

In a flash I remembered that the Englishman had hurt his thumb during his bout with Sam Langford.

Would he know me, I wondered? I was afraid to lift the glass of rum that had been brought, lest he should see my hand trembling. I saw that he was watching me intently. Feigning to be very drunken, I quickly tossed off the drink and called for more.

I was convinced now that this was the man I was searching for. His voice was hoarse and his vile, brutal *argot* perfect. It was almost impossible to imagine him to be the polished gentleman of the baccarat-table. There was the evidence of the thumb, however, and I could see when he drank that his teeth were not really broken, merely stopped out with black wax—an old trick, but which would deceive most people.

This last proof was to me absolutely conclusive. After a little more coarse banter, the evil creature seemed satisfied, and went back to his friends in the corner.

Then I made a great mistake ; I was young and intensely agitated. I went up to the bar and asked for more rum. Jerking my head towards the corner where the men were, I asked the tavern keeper, “Who is the man who spoke to me? Is that ‘La Glu’?” Instantly I realised my stupidity, but it was too late. Lifting a bottle, the landlord aimed a blow at me, yelling at the same time, “Quick—*les aminches*—a police spy.” Now I was in for it. Only quick action could save me.

Dodging the bottle, I threw the contents of my glass full into the landlord’s face ; then, seizing a wine-bottle, I hurled it at the filthy oil lamp swinging from a beam, smashing it. The burning oil poured down on to the oncoming apaches. With a jump I was at the door, which swung outwards. But I was not to get away so easily. A burly form on the steps threw itself on me, and I felt the biting stab of a knife in my shoulder. Hitting out with all my might, I managed to free myself, and dashed up the stairs, just as the men came through the door, headed by “La Glu.” The man who had stabbed me blocked their way for a second, and I gained the street. I heard shouts from the end I had come in by, and more men were running from there, attracted by the continuous yells of “*Un mouchard*—a police spy!” I also shouted “*Un mouchard ! Un mouchard ! This way !*” and ran at top speed for the other end, where I rushed full into the arms of a half-dozen policemen led by the one who had directed me. It was lucky they were there, for I was faint and drenched in blood. The knife-thrust had severed an artery in my arm.

With their help I reached a telephone, and at once rang up headquarters and Bannister. He was not there. "He is probably at the Avenue Wagram," his employee told me.

Stopping only long enough to have a bandage applied by a chemist, I raced there in a car. A plain-clothes man told me that the American was watching the back of the house. I found him at the top windows of a building that overlooked Ainsworth's flat. He listened eagerly to my story. "Good! The front of the house is watched, too, and the police will be after the men from Emile's. We'll catch him as he comes in."

"Are they going to arrest Ainsworth if he comes in by the front?" I asked.

"No, for we want evidence. He must not know that we suspect him."

We waited tensely for an hour. Suddenly Bannister gripped my arm—the sound one, luckily.

"There he is," he whispered.

I looked, and saw a dark form disappear into an opening opposite, that we had not previously noticed. "Quick now," my friend said to one of the men waiting behind us. "Signal your men to enter Ainsworth's flat and catch him coming out from his secret room."

Five minutes later we stood in the library. Before us, safely handcuffed, was Ainsworth, dishevelled and bleeding from the struggle with the men who had captured him. The door behind the bookcase was wide open. He had been seized as he came out.

What a room that was!

It was lined with steel throughout. The opening on to the roof was a shutter of metal, painted on the outside the colours and shape of the stone wall. A spring opened

it from within or without. Hanging over a chair against the wall were the clothes I had seen "La Glu" wearing. On the small table in front of a mirror were a wig and grease-paint. A thorough search brought to light clothes of various descriptions, and, best of all, a pair of grey suede gloves with one button missing, also some securities and bonds that were identified as having belonged to Miss Fergusson.

We also found a pair of diamond earrings that were later recognised by people who had known Miss Lucy van Bhurgen.

Last of all we brought to light a wallet marked J. White.

On the table beside the mirror was a large photograph of "La Glu" himself. When I say "La Glu," I mean the apache. Dufresne was of the opinion that Ainsworth had killed the Frenchman at some time, and had then conceived the idea of impersonating him, using the photograph as a means for making up correctly.

At the trial, which lasted a week, Maître Henri Vasseur, who defended Ainsworth, called medical evidence to show that his client was insane. The court, however, declined to accept this view. Then it was that one of the finest speeches I have ever heard was made by the learned counsel. It lasted five hours. Maître Vasseur laboured to prove that all the crimes committed had been the work of the real apache, that Ainsworth had only amused himself by masquerading as the Frenchman. The jury were in doubt as to what verdict to bring. Before they retired, however, a new witness was called by the prosecution. He was a builder—Dubois—who testified to having seen Ainsworth, dressed in a grey

lounge suit and wearing grey gloves, enter the house where Miss Fergusson was murdered, early on the morning of the crime, and he also saw him leave some hours later carrying a package.

The concierge at the Avenue Wagram had stated that Ainsworth had left the previous day for Vichy dressed in that fashion. On this evidence he was convicted under the name of Ainsworth, *alias* Raoul Pontier, nicknamed "La Glu." He was sentenced to be guillotined, but, as I stated, the sentence was commuted to life-long detention and deportation to Noumea.

He shouted out at the conclusion of the trial, "You are all dogs! I despise you! I am innocent!"

There is little doubt, however, that he really did commit all these dreadful crimes; for, some months after his departure for New Caledonia, the American police sent in a series of photographs of finger-prints that corresponded to those I had obtained from Ainsworth. These had been taken at the time when the American police investigated the torturing of a young girl, Carmen Muller. Unfortunately, they had been classified wrongly, and did not arrive in time for the trial.

Nothing was ever discovered of what actually became of Lucy van Bhurgen.

It was later disclosed that Ainsworth, under his real name, which I withhold, had got into trouble when quite a young man, and had joined the French Foreign Legion, serving his time in Africa.

It is probable that while there he met many French scamps of the worst kind, and thus became familiar with their ways and language.

Bannister and I became firm friends from that time, and we still correspond, although he has now retired and settled down to a life of ease in his native land.

By the way, “ La Glu ” means birdlime, a name that was bestowed on the apache by his fellow-criminals because he never “ let go ” a victim.

THE STORY OF JEAN ORTH

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF JEAN ORTH

CROCODILES ; yellow, slit-eyed Chinese ; and the red and blue uniform of the soldiers of the French Foreign Legion, will always appear in the background when I think of Jean Orth and his sad and dreadful love-story.

But towering above them all, like some evil genius, truly Eastern in thought and deed, is the awful Chang Loo. In his claw-like hands are the carver's tools, and the ivory discs on which he recorded their fate, with all the artistry of his tortuous, subtle mind.

A mysterious and mystical being was Jean Orth, and by many even believed to have been a myth, yet none was more truly human, nor more simply great, than this man, who for love gave all, and held the power and pomp which might have been his well lost for one happy month.

For Jean Orth—to call him by the name he adopted, disdaining the string of sonorous titles rightfully his own, was heir to the throne of Austria.

A family on whom a curse was laid were the Hapsburgs. In return for power they had bartered happiness, and this Jean Orth believed so truly that he lived as if human joys were not for him ; although he hoped perhaps to stay the hand of fate by renunciation. I shall always treasure his memory, and the confidence he reposed in me, and not until I heard that he had died, unknown and among strangers, in an American casualty ward, did I hunt through my records and spend an evening with the past—a yellow, stained note-book, some photographs,

and an ivory disc—one only—that chance had given me.

Crocodiles, sampans, and yellow faces, float across the pages whilst I transcribe the words I wrote so long ago, as they fell one by one in a sad murmur from Jean Orth's trembling lips.

I had gone to Saigon, that busy outpost of French civilisation in Indo-China, on a mission for the French Government. This mission was to try and trace a young Italian who, it was believed, had joined the Foreign Legion. Since then he had become the last male representative of a noble house in Rome, and, much against their principles, the military authorities had consented to liberate the young man—if he could be found.

The Foreign Legion ! Tomb of all hopes and ambitions, and last refuge of the outcast, who severs all earthly ties when he enters its ranks.

He replaces them by *esprit de corps*—the spirit of that great brotherhood of the world's failures.

Neither name, family, nor country have they who don the blue and red ; nothing but a great contempt for life and death alike, and a burning desire to forget.

" *Vive la Légion !* " is the cry one hears from the Chinese junks which carry the troops to these far-lying outposts that keep back the yellow-faced savages ; and " *Vive la Légion !* " peals back from the shore where others are waiting to follow.

For they do not live long, these *légionnaires*. Fever and swamp, snake and poisoned arrows, tortures and nameless horrors that no Western mind could conceive, keep the recruiting officers busy, filling the gaps in the ever-melting ranks.

The monastery may tempt men who believe in a God, but the legion is the last home of those who believe in nothing, and whose bitterness will not let them rest.

.
At Saigon I obtained the necessary permits, and, after gathering what information I could, I decided to go up country to Fort Massena.

Since my desire was to mix with the legionaries as much as possible, I accepted the invitation of an officer who was in command of a division just arrived from Sidi-bel-Abbes to travel with them. They were to embark the next day on a Chinese junk that would take them up the winding yellow river, infested by hundreds of ravenous, slow-moving crocodiles, to Fort Danton—a four weeks' journey.

Nearing our first landing-place, I was surprised to see how eagerly everyone looked forward to a halt at the little village composing Port Fo-Chen. The officer told me that a man was living there, had been living there for years, whom everyone called "*Le Père de la Légion*" ("The Father of the Legion"). His welcome was always certain, and during the short halt, wine and food were dispensed to all alike.

A white man living all alone there for years! It seemed unbelievable. I confess I became very eager to meet this strange man, and to find out what freak of circumstance had led up to his retirement from the civilised world, and caused him to settle down to a terribly lonely and hard life in one of the most savage places of the earth. That there was a romantic story of some kind attached to him I felt sure. Soon we rounded the bend in the river leading to the little landing-stage, and I looked out eagerly for a sight of the bungalow.

Sure enough, there it was, with a tall, thin man, in white pyjamas, with a conical palm-leaf hat, such as the better class natives wear, on his head, standing on the wide verandah. As we drew nearer he waved his hand and shouted, "*Vive la Légion !*"

A hoarse answer went up from all on board : "*Vive la Légion !*"

Such, then, was my first meeting with Jean Orth. The name at the time conveyed nothing to me. I introduced myself, and we shook hands.

A fine, intellectual type of man I thought him, even at first sight. He had large grey eyes that had stared long into empty spaces, and had seen there many visions of pain and suffering. His mouth was stern yet kindly, and there was no doubt that he was more than liked by all the harum-scarum rascals who drank his wine and ate his food.

One by one he shook hands with the two hundred, gravely welcoming each, yet scanning them closely, as if looking for either a friend or a foe.

No doubt he had watched for their coming, and, before the slowly crawling junk clumsily made the landfall, orders had been given to the yellow house-boys to receive them as they knew the tradition was that they should be received.

A long bamboo table was laid on the verandah for the officers, and in the garden were many tables for the men. The first toast, in which our host joined, was "*Vive la Légion !*" Then he withdrew, nor did I see him again until the legionaries, officers and men, had all returned on board. I was about to leave, too, although I much would have liked to chat with the "*Père de la Légion,*" when, as if in answer to my unspoken wish,

a Tamil boy handed me a note from him, requesting me to remain for the night, as the junk did not leave until the morning. Following the messenger, I found Jean Orth sitting on the landward side of his house, smoking a cheroot of the country. He invited me to be seated, whilst coffee and liqueurs were placed on the table before us. After some moments of silence I ventured to express my thanks, and also my astonishment at finding a European in such a savage spot. He smiled and bowed in return, but did not reply to my veiled question. Instead, he asked me the reason for my own journey up the river. I explained the search I was engaged upon, and asked him if he had seen anyone resembling the man I had come to find. I showed him a miniature of the lad which had been given to me by the Italian ambassador.

Jean Orth looked at it long and earnestly. Then he sighed. "Ah, monsieur," he said, "you will never find him. The Legion swallows them up—all these fine young fellows; and the savages, for ever at war with France, kill those that the poisonous jungle spares. I know how long and how useless such a search must be." His voice trembled as he said this, and I thought I saw that his eyes were moist.

Courtesy forbade me to question him on what I felt was a painful secret, and so I changed the topic, hoping that he would revert to it himself. We sat chatting for some time, but nothing further did I learn about him.

A most charming man, and one at once refined and cultured.

In the morning, when a legionary came to fetch me, I endeavoured to bid him farewell, but the house-boys said that he was asleep.

So I was forced to leave, promising myself that I would see him again on my return.

I spent several months travelling farther and farther into the country without result. At last I gave up my search as hopeless, and decided to return. Of my many adventures I will say nothing now, for my story is of Jean Orth, but, although I love all that is strange and weird, I often think with a shudder of that dreadful land—like the white orchids that grow there, beautiful to the eye, but poisonous at heart.

So one day a down-stream junk again brought me to the little harbour of Fo-Chen. Eagerly I looked for the hospitable bungalow. It was no longer there!

I rubbed my eyes. Fear and astonishment held me rigid. Where the little cluster of wooden buildings had been there was nothing now but a heap of fire-blackened beams, damp and desolate; and for a distance of several hundred yards all around, the trees had been chopped down and burned, and the plantations destroyed. My heart was heavy for kindly Jean Orth, and I landed immediately to question the men in the sampans as to what had happened. Sullen growls answered me. I could get no other information than, "White man gone—dead."

When I arrived at Saigon I informed the authorities at once of what I had seen. I was told that they knew nothing of any deed of violence, and that the man himself had passed through Saigon and taken a *Messagerie* boat to Marseilles.

Now I learned for the first time who Jean Orth really was. It was the Italian Consul, to whom I had gone to report my failure, who told me what he knew—that he was heir to the Austrian throne, but, having quarrelled

with the despotic old man at Vienna, he had voluntarily renounced his name and position, and with it the right to reign.

“As always,” said the Consul, “*cherchez la femme !*”

The woman in this case was the Countess Rađiziwill von Tchernoff, famous for a time in Vienna for her beauty.

The Prince had been her playmate, and had loved her from childhood. She was too far beneath him in rank, however, and all his pleading to be allowed to marry her had been in vain. “What happened afterwards,” said my informant, “I do not know. There was some talk of a secret marriage that came to the ears of the Emperor and then one day she disappeared. A furious quarrel, I am told, took place between the fiery young lover and the old despot, whom he accused of having ordered her abduction. The Countess was an orphan, and no one troubled much about her. I was Consul in Vienna then, and I remember the sensation that was caused when the young prince gave up everything and left Vienna to seek her, taking the name he now bears. I do not know what brought him to Cochin-China, but it may be that he came in search of his love, for he has never found her.”

.

The next morning a Messagerie boat—the *Paul Lecat*—was leaving for Marseilles, and so, having nothing further to do in Saigon, I booked my passage on her, hoping to pick up the trace of Jean Orth in the great French port.

At Singapore some few more passengers joined the ship. One of them was apparently very ill, for he was carried aboard in an ambulance stretcher.

It was Jean Orth, although almost unrecognisable. His black hair had turned white, and his fine, aristocratic face was emaciated and ghastly. Very much

concerned, I inquired of the ship's doctor, as soon as we were under way, if I might see his patient, whom I had met before. He at once consented. Jean Orth remembered me, and smiled a greeting.

As the days passed we became great friends, the more so as I spoke his own tongue. Soon he was able to remain on deck stretched out on a lounge chair, and there it was one evening that at last he told me his story.

I promised Jean Orth that I would not repeat the tale to anyone until ten years at least had passed, and that promise I have kept. I wrote it all down that same night as soon as I was alone, and I can therefore tell it in his own words :

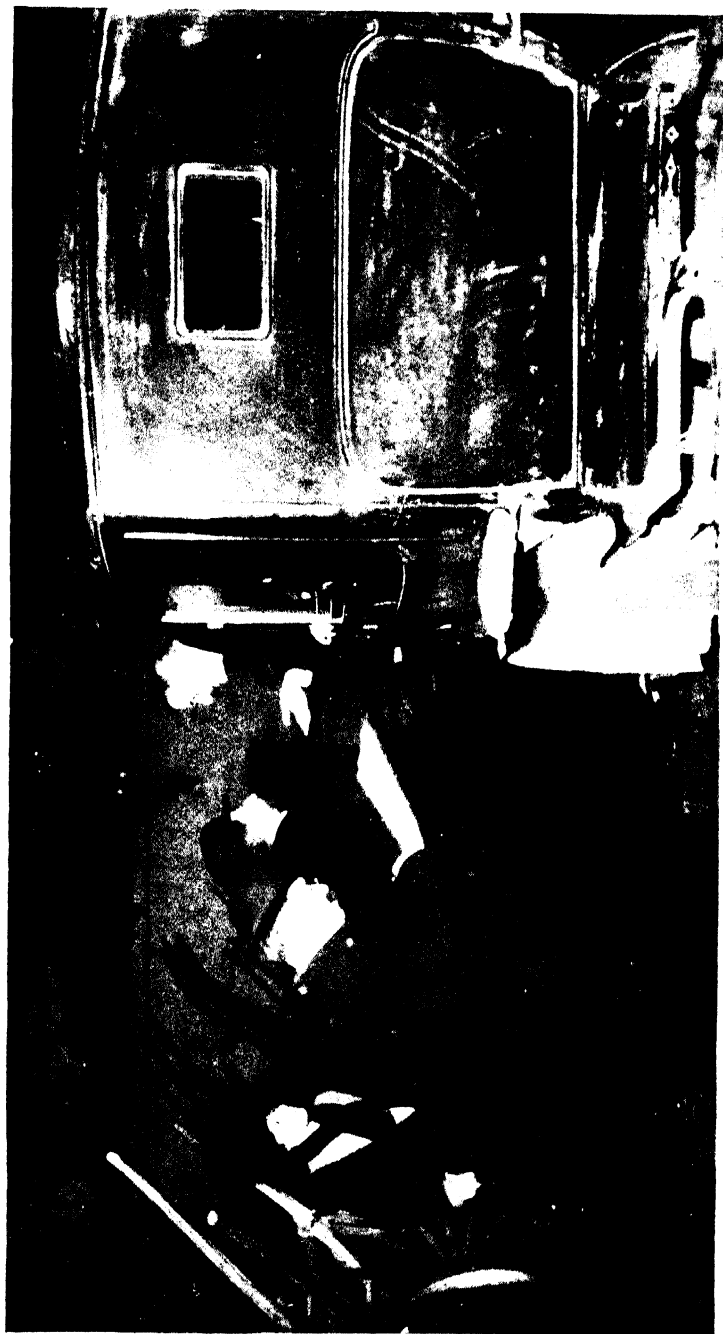
.

" I do not know," he began, " why I feel that I should like to tell you how I became as you see me—a weary old man already, though barely forty—but you have lightened my burden a little by your kindness to a broken man, and, better still, you have asked me no questions.

" I will illustrate my story also, and the illustrations are very beautiful, although every one of them has been bathed by my tears. Go down to my cabin, please, and on the couch you will see an inlaid sandalwood box. Do not open it, but bring it to me."

I went below to his cabin, and there found the box, which I brought up as he had requested. Pushing it towards me, he said, " Open it now and look."

It was a beautiful piece of native workmanship. The interior of the box was completely covered with figures, most delicately chiselled and engraved on mother-of-pearl and ivory. Elephants, crocodiles, and all the strange flora and fauna of the East were there, some in conventional attitudes that revealed the Chinese artist,



THE EARLY DION-BOUTON CAR, WHICH WAS FOUND ABANDONED.
The bearded man is the late Dr. Bertillon, and in the car is the chief of the survey, Monsieur Guichard



GARNIER, THE MAN WHO SHOT THE BANK MESSENGER GABY.

An anthropometrical photograph, belonging to the Paris Sûreté.

but most of them strangely natural and lifelike. On the inside of the lid I saw a large portrayal of what I thought at first was a marvellously artistic picture of our Saviour. On looking closer, however, I saw that the artist had not reproduced a cross. Rather was the body on a species of flat wood ; also, instead of the letters I.N.R.I. over the head were the letters K.V.K.C.L.E.

The portrayal of the crucifixion was extraordinarily intense, and the artist, instead of bringing out an expression of sweetness and forgiveness, had rather accentuated a most startling expression of agony and suffering.

This triumph of art was a masterpiece, and the work of a genius.

Jean Orth saw my enthusiasm, and, looking away, said sadly, "That is the frontispiece to my story. Look into the box now and you will see the smaller illustrations." I obeyed, and saw a number of ivory discs and square counters of mother-of-pearl, about two inches in diameter, of most wonderful lustre. Each one bore a picture on one side. Each one of these, too, was a work of art and patience.

"Now listen," my friend said. "I will put them before you in their order.

"Here, first of all—but you have heard of her—this is she." So saying, he handed me a counter. On it was the sweet face of a lovely woman, classical in feature and outline.

"From the moment we met as children I loved her, and I shall go on loving her until we meet again, wherever that may be."

My poor friend's voice shook painfully, while his eyes were full of tears.

Ew

"All our dynasty has been accursed. There is a blight on us, and none of the Hapsburgs shall ever know true happiness.

"I had thought for a time that I might soften the Emperor, for he, too, had loved beneath him, and was forced to renounce his love, and the bitterness in his heart made him a cruel despot.

"It was in vain, however, that I pleaded and cajoled. Although most of my wishes were hardly uttered before they were faithfully carried out, the old monarch absolutely refused to give way to my desire to marry Countess von Tchernoff. Finally she and I decided to marry in secret, and snatch such few years of happiness as fate might give, for she loved me too—loved me as fondly as I loved her.

"It was all carefully planned. We had arranged to leave Austria and to take refuge in France. We were married in a little frontier town, and went on from there to Paris. Ah! I am grateful even now to think that one brief month was ours. For one month we were deliriously happy, and then came that awful day when emissaries from Vienna spirited her away whilst I was from home. How it was done I never found out.

"I travelled back to the Austrian capital as fast as train would take me, and found that the marriage had been annulled for reasons of State. No one would or could tell me anything further. All that I could discover was that a young officer of the Guards, Karl von Koulenz, had been chosen to abduct her. I hunted the world over for them both, but fruitlessly, till at last, after two years had passed, I met a soldier of the Legion at Marseilles who had been in the Guards—my own regiment.

"He had been court-martialled for some offence, and,

escaping, had joined the Foreign Legion. He told me that he had met Karl von Koulenz in Saigon in the company of a woman who bore his name and passed as his wife, and that von Koulenz stated his intention of joining the Legion also, as being the only place where he could hide.

"Now at last I had a clue. In haste I came on to Saigon, but, alas! no one could tell me anything. Men in the Legion are well hidden.

"Still, I did not give up hope. I knew that most of the *légionnaires* in the East come out to the Tonkin Chinese border sooner or later, so I bought the bungalow wherein you met me and made my home a place of rest and pleasure for all the *légionnaires*. Some day I felt he would pass there and I would kill him. I did not think that she would come too, but if I spared his life I believed that he would tell me where she was. If not, he should die a hundred deaths. I could not and would not believe that she had willingly become his wife. I knew only too well the means the Emperor employed to break people to his will." Jean Orth paused, and handed me another of the pearl counters. "That is he, poor devil! You see the letters, Karl von Koulenz, Capitaine Légion Etrangère." I bent over and looked at it closely. The fair, bearded face had a remarkable resemblance to the features portrayed in the crucifixion on the lid, and the letters were the same—K.V.K.C.L.E.

"Yes," said my friend, "he it is, and it has been shown me, as to many, that vengeance is not for man, and that it recoils on him who tries to snatch God's prerogative."

The next counter he gave me was more crudely carved than the others, as if the craftsman had disdained to spend any time on his own portrayal. Yet the slanting

eyes and thin-lipped mouth, in strange contrast to the high, intellectual forehead, filled me with loathing. Somehow, I do not know why, this face made me shudder—the face of a devil I thought it.

“That,” he continued, “is Chang Loo, once my friend. Yes”—as I looked up incredulously—“he was my friend, and the murderer of von Koulenz and my wife. He also was the artist who fashioned this box and its contents, and who thought to avenge me in his Eastern way. He is dead—I killed him—so let him rest, as I hope soon to rest too.

“You looked startled,” continued the voice of Jean Orth. “Well, you will soon have heard the rest of my tale. Chang Loo, then, was a local king, and, although it is a rare thing to find a native whom we may treat as an equal, Chang Loo was such a man. He was the last of a family which for untold centuries had ruled the little province where he lived, and had counted themselves as a race apart.

“Chang Loo was neither Chinese nor a Malay, but of some more ancient race that had held sway over the district where stands his palace, for countless generations. Now the place is only a miserable village of narrow streets, and dirty huts, but once it must have been a large town, for surrounding the village are immense heaps of stones, and ruins enough to build the pyramids. Chang Loo was an ancestor worshipper, and often he would show me their names engraved in the stones of his palace, and recount to me tales of their splendour and greatness. By hundreds he counted them, but he knew them all—their names, their titles, and their works. All had cultivated the art of carving in ivory and pearl-shell as a pastime, and so Chang Loo had inherited their talent, and his art

was as great as—well, you can see for yourself how great it was. Then, centuries ago, came the yellow races, and pillaged and destroyed the town, but Chang Loo's palace they respected, for his family were reputed to be sorcerers, and able to command the spirits of the dead. Until the French came and conquered Indo-China his forefathers had lived alone, mixing with none, and marrying only the daughters of their numerous wives who were still of the old stock. So they had deteriorated, as all people who intermarry must, until in Chang Loo the concentrated pride of race had produced a giant in intellect but a devil in heart—only this I did not know at first.

“ So it was that he lived a lonely life, for he considered all those about him as not only inferior to him, but as hardly human—mere animals sent to serve him. You may guess what the word ‘honour’ meant to him—his own or a friend's. In me he had welcomed an equal, and we became as brothers. I, too, was glad of a friend and companion, for the dragging days were like centuries.

“ It was not long before I had told him my story, only keeping back the fact that I believed that she, my wife, had been betrayed and deceived, and that I still loved her, and wished ardently to find her, so that I might hold her in my arms once more. But I told him of my wish for vengeance on the man who had taken her from me. Was it my pride that forbade me to tell him of my great love? I do not know. Perhaps merely because it seemed sacrilege to me to speak of her at all to one of his race.

“ Here is the spot where my loved one died and all earthly desire ended for me.” So saying, he pushed some more counters towards me. “ And these, you will see, are merely supernumeraries.”

I turned the counters over. One showed a high, pagoda-like structure—Chang Loo's house. Others, I saw with a shudder, were engravings of crocodiles, with their jaws agape or in a sleeping posture. Several others were views of the yellow stream, and one showed indistinctly a species of raft floating on the water, with two figures on it, and gaping crocodiles pushing their snouts over the edge. All were of the same wonderful craftsmanship.

"One evening," Jean Orth continued, "Chang Loo's carriers brought him in his *punjani* to my bungalow. He alighted, and came smilingly up the steps. As usual, he brought several gifts for me, mostly his own work in ivory or rare woods—faces wonderfully fashioned, tiny ivory figures, and such-like trifles—for he was proud of his skill. This evening one of his servants also held a bulky, silk-wrapped package, which he placed on a chair. It contained, as I afterwards found, this box.

"Chang Loo waved his hand towards it, and said smilingly, 'You must look at this after I have gone. It contains a wonderful story. Now get your field-glasses and watch the stream. You shall see that I have avenged you, and that my vengeance was fitting for those who besmirched your honour.' I looked at him in surprise. I had seldom seen him so animated. His black eyes glittered and his lips worked.

"For a minute I was at a loss to understand what he meant, for I had lately given up all hope of ever finding either the man or my dear love; then something in Chang Loo's face made me afraid. An icy hand gripped my heart. Was it telepathy? In that instant I knew the truth. I rushed for my glasses, and looked where Chang Loo's yellow finger pointed.

“God! If I lived a thousand years I should never forget the picture that floated into view. Crucified!

“The yellow devil had caught those that I had sought for so long, and had crucified them on a raft, which he had then set afloat on this crocodile-infested stream. They were alive—still alive, for I could see them move. Their heads were turned towards me, and their lips framed an appeal.

“Hurling the glasses into his face, I seized the smiling yellow demon by the throat and waist, and ran, yelling and screaming to my boys, down to the water. With a madman’s strength I threw Chang Loo far out into the river, and then, seizing a sampan, I pushed it into the water and paddled furiously out to where the raft, with its awful burden, was driving down on the current. With frenzied hands I seized the edge and crawled on to it.

“My love, my love! Her dear eyes were wide open, and I saw her white lips part in a pain-racked smile.

“Frantically I tore at the terrible nails that held her to the wood. In vain. I could only hold her head and cover her face with kisses. Her last words were for me alone; hardly whispered, but they told me that she had been true to me, and—but I will say no more. Her last words were only mine.

“Hours seemed to pass. As in a stupor I felt hands seize me and help me to shore. When the red mists had lifted I found myself sitting on my verandah with my dead love in my arms. She sleeps now under the palms, and the poor devil who had shared her fate lies there also. I fled that night just in time—not that I wished to live, but I did not wish to die the ‘slow death,’ as those fiends call it, for I knew that to have killed their chieftain meant torture such as our minds cannot conceive.

“ For weeks I wandered half-crazed, until some of my friends of the Legion found me, unconscious, but still clutching this box. They brought me to Saigon.

“ The number of counters and their exquisite workmanship may perhaps give you some idea of the time Chang Loo held those two captive, while he carved them and matured his plans.”

Sadly my friend gathered up his relics, replaced them in the box, and, helped by one of the men, went below. The next morning we arrived at Marseilles, and he bade me good-bye.

I have never met him again, but my little book of notes has kept the story fresh in my memory, and one ivory counter that had rolled to the deck, was picked up by a sailor and brought to me—a gaping, loathsome crocodile.

THE DIAMOND MAKER

CHAPTER VI

THE DIAMOND MAKER

ALTHOUGH I actively participated in very many strange and tragic cases, I find it necessary to choose very carefully, and often to reject some of the most dramatic recorded in my notes, in order to avoid making this book a mere recital of gruesome crimes, and thus becoming monotonous. For that reason I have chosen this episode, which for once has nothing to do with what is technically called crime, but which, nevertheless, has features so uncommon and fantastic that it may yet be worth relating. It is one of those cases, too, of which the memory is most pleasant, for once more my friend Bannister and I were harnessed together. Of the many Americans I have known he was the most likeable. Always cheerful—brimming over with unquenchable good humour and vitality. A man, too, whom one could absolutely and implicitly trust. His one failing was his love of disguise ; almost as if he were ashamed of the handsome, clean-shaven features that were his own. I have been told—although I will not vouch for the absolute truth of the tale—that his friends had the greatest difficulty in persuading him not to disguise himself on his wedding-day.

.
One morning Dr. Bertillon, in whose department I was then working, called me and informed me that Monsieur Guichard, the chief of the Paris Sûreté, wished me to come down to headquarters. When I arrived there

I found Bannister and Superintendent Howard, of the South African C.I.D., waiting in the office. I could tell by Bannister's solemn handclasp that something out of the way had happened.

"We are off to Matto Grosso, my boy," was his greeting. "I thought of you at once when this came along from New York. I know you'll be delighted, for it's a country you love."

I thanked him, but expressed a doubt whether Guichard would let me go.

"All settled," he replied. "Here is your *carte-de-voyage*, and we three will leave as soon as possible—Superintendent Howard, you, and I."

"What is it?" I queried.

"Something very queer, we'll talk as we eat at the Gare de Lyon. We'll catch 2.45 de luxe to Lisbon, and there take the boat to Pernambuco."

"Good heavens!" I said, "what a trip to spring on a man just settled in his house."

"Well," said Bannister, with a grin, "I always wanted to see Brazil; and if it can be done in the way of business—why not? It's not often one gets such a chance."

"H'm!" I said doubtfully. "It's evident you don't know South America. However, we'll manage to survive, I daresay; so I've no objection."

While partaking of luncheon at the station restaurant, which, although a railway buffet, serves one of the best meals to be had in Paris, Superintendent Howard gave me a brief summary of the quest we were setting out upon.

From a small town in Brazil letters had been sent to various well-known people in Kimberley. These letters

were extremely peculiar, to say the least. The writer apparently knew well the people to whom he wrote, although they did not know him. He signed himself C. A. Johnson. Several letters had been intercepted by the authorities addressed to some of the more shady merchants of the diamond town who were suspected of illicit diamond buying. All these letters spoke of a new method for producing diamonds artificially. The writer stated that for his experiments he needed some South African stones in the rough.

These he was willing to buy and pay cash for, or he would send back the original diamond, paying for its use by sending at the same time one of his artificially manufactured stones. The letters then went on to explain, in a curiously confused, semi-technical jargon, the reason why he needed the rough diamonds.

"Induced crystallisation," I remember, was one of the phrases. A queer sort of story, I thought, with more behind it than met the eye ; and I promised myself an interesting investigation.

At Lisbon the tender took us out to the waiting liner. Our state-rooms had been reserved by the authorities, and the trip across was very pleasant. I found Superintendent Howard, of the South African Criminal Investigation Department, a very agreeable companion, but inclined to be taciturn and reserved. To him the voyage was merely a time of inaction and waiting. He had a marvellous gift of shutting himself off from the outside world and drifting through the days in a species of reverie broken by spells of reading.

His hobby I discovered was chemistry, and he would sit for days poring over formulas and equations. He had taken several technical works along, and these he

studied while Bannister and I amused ourselves by the usual routine of shipboard games.

Bannister was entirely happy ; for he was able to organise amateur theatricals and produce several clever little plays. He was thus able to indulge his love of impersonation. I remember that he played the part of Shylock too. And, if his rendering of the Venetian's impassioned tirade was not altogether Shakespearean, his "make-up" as the Jew was wonderful, although it is true that he looked more like a prehistoric cave-man than a merchant of old Italy.

Good old Bannister ! To him the whole business of life was a game, which he played with the zest of a schoolboy.

We arrived at Pernambuco in due course. Here we had to take a train to Pueblos. The Hacienda Miriam, from where the letters had come, was a day's journey on horseback from there. Pueblos is a small town of the usual type. Stone houses were few ; and the peon quarter was only built of sun-dried bricks—the adobe so often described. There was the usual Hotel de la Plaza, and here Bannister and Howard elected to stay, while I went forward the next day alone, since I was the only one who spoke the language.

I set out fairly early, accompanied by a guide, and arrived at the *hacienda* where this Johnson lived before noon. It was not a large place, but I saw a series of outhouses at the back, glass-roofed and strongly built. Walking up the garden-path, I hailed a young girl busy milking a goat, and requested her to fetch "el Señor Johnson." She went at once, and I sat down to wait.

After a few minutes I heard a step, and, turning, saw not an Anglo-Saxon, as I had expected, but a little

Frenchman, whom I had last seen in the prisoner's dock in Paris. It was Lemoine, the man who had persuaded the diamond king, Sir Julius Wernher, that he had discovered the secret of manufacturing diamonds. Lemoine!

He knew me, too, and came forward with a smile and outstretched hand. "Ah, Monsieur Ashton-Wolfe, and so the clever French police have tracked me, eh? Well, they have no case, for Sir Julius is dead."

"Not the French police," I told him, "but the American and South African."

"So, so," he said, rather perplexed.

"But why? What have they against me?"

I told him why I had come, and the reason for the detectives' journey.

"But," he said, still doubtful, "this is no case for the police. I honestly want to buy rough diamonds for experimental purposes. I am really on the eve of manufacturing stones big enough to be used commercially."

"Nevertheless," I countered, "you know that once you were arrested for fraud, and that Mr. Hoats of Cape Town and Sir Julius both swore that you had swindled them. No one will believe you now."

"That is why I am Mister Johnson and not C. Lemoine. When I turn out the perfect stone the world will believe. But come inside. You have mentioned Sir Julius, and I would like to tell you the story of a clever, clever plot that brought the head plotter millions of pounds profit—and exile and disgrace to me."

My mission being to find out all I could, I followed this strange man into the *patio* of the house. I was very curious to know what he had to tell me, for the Lemoine

case had been a mystery to everyone, and the true facts have never been disclosed.

I remember very well the sensation caused by the announcement that a young scientist had discovered a means of making diamonds by copying the methods of Mother Nature on a small scale.

As everyone knows, the theory is very simple. Diamonds are crystallised carbon. To make them three things only are necessary—carbon, heat, and pressure. Nature does this easily, for has she not at her disposal both terrific heat and pressure unlimited? Thus where, as in Kimberley, in a volcanic vent, we find blue clay, which is carbon and clay, we may confidently stake a claim for a diamond-mine.

Unfortunately these mines are rare; and the means to reproduce volcanic heat and pressure are too costly to make the manufacture of diamonds profitable. The great French savant, Moisson, produced diamonds in an electric furnace, supplying the pressure by divers means. He made diamonds; but they were microscopically small. This Lemoine had stated that he had found the flux and the formula that made the manufacture of diamonds a commercial and profitable venture.

According to his account in various scientific papers, a diamond weighing five carats had been made in his laboratory, and the cost, in quantities, would be only a few shillings a carat. Everyone smiled and shrugged their shoulders on reading this.

Then along came Sir Julius Wernher, the Kimberley Diamond King and President of the De Beers, the largest and richest diamond-mine in the world. After assisting at some demonstrations, the news circulated that he

had been convinced that Lemoine had truly discovered a method that was practical.

Shortly afterwards a contract was made whereby the secret formula was to be deposited in a sealed envelope in the vaults of a London bank. Further experiments were then to be made in the presence of experts and witnesses, and, on the proof being conclusive, the huge sum of 125 million francs was to be paid to Lemoine for his formula.

This came as a thunderbolt to the world's diamond-merchants. Everyone knows, of course, that the value of an article becomes less as the article becomes more common and easily obtainable. Much greater quantities of diamonds are found than are put up for sale. A flooding of the market would mean a drop in prices.

One may imagine the feelings of those who had quantities of stones in reserve. These would be almost worthless if Lemoine's announcement were true. No one would have believed it if such a personality as Sir Julius Wernher had not given credence to the story of the Frenchman. It is certain that both the value of diamonds and the price of shares in the world's diamond-mines dropped with a rush. There was a slump, and stones and shares could be bought cheaply, if anyone cared to buy.

Then came the day of the great experiment. Lemoine had fitted up sumptuous laboratories at the expense of Sir Julius Wernher, and there the final proof of the possibility of manufacturing the king of jewels was to be given. On a certain day Sir Julius Wernher, a Mr. Hoats, a diamond-expert from the Cape, several lapidaries and French scientists assembled at the laboratory in Paris. With beating hearts, all watched Lemoine take

a cylinder of specially hardened steel. Like a conjurer he passed it around to show that it was empty.

His special mixture was then introduced. Of course, no one could examine this secret mixture. The cylinder was screwed up, and then placed into the electric furnace.

Hours passed in anxious waiting. Finally the white-hot cylinder was taken out. Now more time had to elapse ; for it had to cool gradually. At last the moment for opening it arrived. Eagerly everyone present crowded around. Inside the tube was a black clinker. This was broken apart with hammer and chisel. From the black mass a dirty, rough crystal was taken by Sir Julius himself—a diamond weighing several carats, and roughly oval in shape !

The stone was cut and polished, and turned out to be of fine quality.

A despairing gasp must have gone up from the jewel-merchants when the news flared out in all the papers.

The experts were convinced !

Then came the next act. A few days later Lemoine was arrested and charged with fraud and swindling by Sir Julius himself.

He had proof positive, he stated, that the diamond which was found in the cylinder had been placed there by the Frenchman when putting in his secret mixture. By a special warrant the famous formula was taken from the bank's vaults and the sealed envelope opened. It indeed contained a certain method for making diamonds.

"Take pure carbon," it stated. "Crystallise it by great heat under terrific pressure, etc. All that you then need to do is to collect your diamonds, when the cylinder is sufficiently cool to open it."

A huge roar of laughter and relief went up from the

erstwhile terrified markets, and again prices soared sky-high !

Lemoine protested that he had been sincere, and that he would tell the whole story at his trial.

But his trial never took place. When he was being taken to the Palace of Justice the special waggon in which he was confined collided with a lorry. Both guards ran to the front, from whence groans and cries proceeded. The driver had tumbled from his seat. On returning to their post inside they found the door open and their prisoner gone.

He was not heard of for some time. Then one day a letter from him was published in a daily paper. This letter came from Austria, and was signed Lemoine. In it he averred that he had been made the victim of a plot ; that he had intended to swindle no one ; that he had been promised a large sum of money by a well-known person, which sum he had never received ; and that he was on his way back to give himself up to the police.

He desired—nay, he insisted—on being met at the frontier by two detectives, to effect his arrest, as he wished to tell the truth about the matter to the whole world at a public trial.

Great excitement was caused by this letter. It was said that Sir Julius had also received a letter, and that he was going with the detectives to be there to meet Lemoine. The indignation of Sir Julius appeared a little overdone to everyone, for he had lost nothing. Indeed, rumour had it that a large number of shares were acquired by him at the time that these were to be obtained cheaply, and that, since the arrest of Lemoine, these shares had attained a price far beyond that at which they were bought.

It was generally thought that the laugh that had gone up over his belief in Lemoine still rankled.

Again the unexpected happened. Lemoine was observed by several people travelling towards France through Switzerland, and he was seen to speak to a man who met him at one of the stations near the frontier. This man handed Lemoine a bulky envelope, and from that moment the Frenchman disappeared. The detectives and Sir Julius waited in vain ; and, on his return, Sir Julius was loudly of the opinion that the whole thing had been a hoax.

Now, after several years, I was face to face with this enigmatic person ; and he had promised to tell me the story.

We sat down, and Lemoine handed me some cigarettes.

"Now, Mr. Lemoine," I said, "what truth is there in these tales that are circulating regarding your trying to obtain rough stones from South Africa, and about smuggling diamonds into North America ? "

"I am not aware that I am doing anything illegal by attempting to buy uncut stones from Kimberley. As for smuggling stones into the States, I should not dream of attempting it. What I wished to know was how far the duty on uncut stones in large quantities would prohibit this traffic becoming commercially profitable. They misunderstood me if they thought I meant to try smuggling. The chief purpose I had in view was to interest big firms in various countries in my experiments and to make sure of a market for my diamonds. I do not suppose that they will send me any stones. I assure you, however, that I am really on the eve of making real diamonds, big enough for commerce, artificially. I will take you afterwards to see my experiments."

"Thanks," I said, smiling. "But, before you do that, tell me now all that lay behind that affair in Paris."

"Well, I will tell you all that I may safely say. Sir Julius is dead, and I am free to a certain extent to speak, but there are some names I will not mention.

"Since my youth I have made crystallisation my special study. Unfortunately my experiments ate up all my capital, and I had to look about for someone to finance me. I had arrived at the certainty that stones, diamonds, can be made in the laboratory, and that their manufacture is profitable. As you know, I had a place in Paris, and there I obtained certain encouraging results.

"One evil day a gentleman called to see me at my experimental laboratory in Levallois. He brought excellent letters of introduction, and appeared very interested in my work.

"He spent several days with me, and even suggested fitting up a larger furnace than I then possessed. When I mentioned my urgent need for money he promised me that he would bring some very wealthy and influential people along if I would arrange for a demonstration. The new furnace was installed, and my new friend paid for it. He then told me that the president of the De Beers, Sir Julius Wernher, was coming to see me.

"A meeting was arranged, and I showed Sir Julius the results of my long and costly experiments. I explained to him that, with the aid of my new furnace, in which I could generate and maintain a temperature of several thousand degrees—an all important condition—I should now be able to produce larger stones, but that I could not undertake to make the manufacture of diamonds a commercial success unless I disposed of

very large sums of money. I agreed to demonstrate my methods, and to produce one or several small stones. I was convinced that I could now do this. It was finally arranged that Sir Julius Wernher and several others were to be present at a demonstration the following week.

“ During the intervening days I worked hard at the composition of my carbon paste and flux, aided by my friend, the man who had bought the furnace and introduced Sir Julius.

“ On the eve of the great experiment I was called away for several hours by an urgent telegram. When I got back to my laboratory this man was waiting for me, and, so one of my men told me, had been waiting for some time.

“ The next morning Sir Julius arrived with several men, strangers to me. In their presence I introduced my mixture and placed the tungsten-steel cylinder in the furnace. My methods have been described, so I will not go into details. When the molten mass was cool it was smashed under the hydraulic press. A stone weighing several carats was found in the centre. It was a fine diamond. I was naturally overjoyed, for the result surpassed my expectations. Sir Julius, too, was delighted and convinced.

“ The contract for my formula was then made, and the formula itself sent to be deposited in a London bank.

“ That same evening the man who had arranged for all this came to see me. His first words were a bomb-shell. He told me that he had placed the stone that was found into my mixture on the evening before, and that this was the only reason why I had not failed lamentably. He then told me that further demonstrations were yet necessary, and for this reason he had brought several

more uncut stones. These he placed on the table. I refused angrily to have anything to do with such a fraudulent scheme. He merely smiled, and explained to me that no one was going to be swindled. That they—he and some others—merely intended to hammer down the prices of stones and shares by inducing people to believe in the manufacture of diamonds. My argument that I really could produce them artificially he turned against me by convincing me that therefore it was not even an untruth to state this publicly. It was merely anticipating. Well, I gave way, and was promised a large sum of money for my silence and complicity.

“I insisted, however, that I should be allowed to continue my experiments. I was told that it was being arranged that new and large premises should be built for me, and that Sir Julius, who was most interested in my work, would pay for these. Imagine my surprise when, shortly after these premises were ready, I was charged by Sir Julius with fraud, and arrested.

“Of course I understood the purpose behind all this later ; then I was too indignant and angry to reason.

“I told my counsel the truth, and vowed that I would tell the whole story in Court. This was not to be, however, for my very plausible friend came to see me, and gave me to understand that no one would believe my story. If, on the other hand, I would be wise and practical my escape would be arranged for, and I would receive a large sum with which to carry on my researches. Well, I allowed myself to be persuaded, and my escape, as everyone knows, was very easy. I was helped to get to Austria.

“But I did not receive the large sum of money. I was furious, of course, the more so as everyone was

making fun of my formula. I wrote to the papers telling them that I was coming back. I also wrote to the gentleman who had been the cause of all my troubles, and warned him that, unless I received the amount promised, I would come to Paris and shout out the truth. They must have thought it a bluff on my part, for I had almost arrived at the frontier when I was met and the money given me, on the condition that I disappeared immediately.

"So there, you see, Monsieur, I was merely used as a means for beating down prices. I deceived no one willingly."

"And now," I asked, "you are really making diamonds? Or is it another attempt to frighten the market?"

"Nothing of the kind! Now, at last, I am making stones—perfect stones—and I wish to arrange for their sale. Come, and I will show you some."

I followed willingly. Lemoine led the way through the dwelling-houses until we reached the outlying buildings which I had noticed. Entering the largest, I was astounded by the amount of electrical apparatus which I saw around me. Big magnets and powerful furnaces filled the whole of one side. One furnace was open, and the glare of the huge arc roaring between giant carbons was dazzling.

Proudly Lemoine explained that he obtained his own power from a nearby waterfall. That was why he had chosen this place on the hillside.

At the bottom in the valley was his generating plant. He then led me to a bench fitted with a lapidary's wheel, and showed me some small, cut stones and several in the rough. They were certainly fine. My head began

to swim ; almost I was convinced that this Lemoine by my side was truly and really the pioneer of a great industry.

He saw what I was thinking, and smiled. " Ah, Monsieur, you English say, ' Give a dog a bad name, eh ! ' But never mind ; the world will soon bow its head before the truth ; and then I shall come into my own ! Here, take this stone, and show it to your chief in Paris. Tell him that I—Lemoine—made it. Keep it as a souvenir."

I took the stone, an uncut one, and, thanking the Frenchman, walked down to where my horse was standing, with my thoughts in a whirl.

Bannister and Howard listened attentively to my story. Bannister seemed inclined to believe, as I did, that there was something very plausible about the story Lemoine had told me. The South African said nothing, but disappeared into his room with the stone I had brought back.

We sat discussing the various aspects of the case until Howard returned. Without a word, he handed the stone to me. I could see that he had been giving it a tentative polishing.

" Well ? " I queried.

" Well," he countered, " your friend's a convincing liar ! But not quite careful enough. If that stone doesn't come from a Brazilian mine I'll——"

" Eat the native fried beans," Bannister said, laughing. " But, seriously, we're lucky to have a chemist with us."

I looked up inquiringly at our reserved partner. His eyes were alight with excitement. " Are you sure ? " I asked him.

" Quite sure. Come and look for yourself."

"All right, sit down. We'll take your word for it. Then what does it all mean?"

"That is more than I can tell you as yet. Some new scheme for a gigantic swindle, I'll wager. I'd like to go up and see this Lemoine myself. You'd better arrange to take both of us to visit him, as financiers, if you like—though I doubt if he'll believe it. By the way, that stone is a *carbonado*, a black diamond. Brazil has the monopoly of them. Very careless of your friend to give it you. That is why I was chosen to go along—diamonds are my speciality."

I examined the stone closely; but to my untrained eye it looked merely like a dark piece of rock-salt.

"We'll spend a couple of days investigating the doings of this Lemoine *alias* Johnson. Perhaps the people here can tell us something," said Bannister.

"Also," he continued, "it would be best if we arrived unexpectedly. So we will start early the day after to-morrow."

Our inquiries disclosed very little.

El Señor Johnson had arrived there some twelve months previously, accompanied by a native woman, remarkable for her closely cropped hair and her extraordinary height.

"Over two metres, señores," the local padre told us.

This priest was an amateur ethnologist, and he insisted that she was certainly a descendant of the Curenqueas—the mythical fighting Amazons—of whom legends still flourish in the whole of Brazil. Together these two extraordinary people, the gigantic woman and the little Frenchman, had inspected the *hacienda*, which he had then bought. The woman was believed to be still living there, although she had only been seen once or twice.

Some months ago, too, they had hired a number of native labourers and carriers, and had made a ten days' trip into the forest.

The Indian workmen were all afraid of the woman, and believed her to be a witch.

Bannister was highly amused at this farrago of nonsense. Howard said nothing, but seemed more than usually thoughtful. To all our questions he repeated the password of the country, *mañana*—to-morrow—until we were thoroughly annoyed.

The next day we made ostensible preparations to leave for the coast, but, instead of taking that road, we turned inland as soon as we were out of sight of the town. No guide was necessary, since I knew the way, and we wanted our visit to be quite unexpected.

When we reached the *hacienda* we found it deserted. Only a native girl—the same one whom I had seen on my first visit—was there.

She could tell us nothing but that Lemoine had gone into the forest, and would not be back until the next day.

There was nothing to do but to leave. Telling the girl that we would return in two days, we turned back.

After letting our horses walk a mile or so, we halted and made camp for our midday meal. Howard, who had said nothing until then, suddenly turned to us.

"This is our chance. We'll stay here until dark, and then return. It's not quite legal, I know; but we shall not get such another opportunity. We'll visit the diamond-factory while the Frenchman is away. Then we shall know once and for all what this fellow's scheme is!"

I felt rather dubious at such a procedure, and said so ; but my two companions overruled me.

We hobbled our horses, and, as soon as it was dark, trudged back on foot to the Hacienda Miriam. I led the way to the large laboratory building where I had seen the furnaces. To our great surprise the door was easily opened, and we entered. Bannister had an electric torch, and with the aid of this we examined the apparatus that had so intrigued me.

Howard inspected everything minutely. On the bench where the polishing wheel was, there were several stones, and these he also examined and tested.

Breaking the silence with a laugh, he said, " Well, that settles it, boys ! The diamond maker is a fraud. All this "—indicating the furnaces—" is for quite a different purpose, and couldn't possibly be used for any experiments in diamond-manufacture. As for these stones, they are natural and of the country——"

At that moment Bannister, who had been searching in a corner, gave an exclamation. Hurrying over to him, we saw him working with his knife round the edges of one of the massive slabs of which the floor was composed.

" This is loose," he whispered excitedly. " Get something to lift it up with."

Before we could do so the whole stone slab pivoted slowly, and a dark opening was revealed beneath it. Evidently the blade of Bannister's knife had pushed back a catch or bolt of some sort that had held it in place. The light of our torch showed us that the ground was only some five feet beneath us. First making sure that the stone could be opened from the inside if shut, we dropped down and pulled it to after us. We could see

that we were in a tunnel which burrowed into the ground and had been shored up with planks and beams. The passage was narrow and low, and we could only advance in single file, stooping almost double. After proceeding for a quarter of an hour we arrived in what was a fairly large chamber, hewn out of the sandstone itself.

Howard examined the walls, where the marks of tools still showed, and pronounced it to be very ancient—probably the work of a bygone people.

Pointing to some figures of strange animals chiselled in relief on the walls, he added that he imagined we must be in a place where some religious rites were formerly performed. As if in support of this view, we now saw against one side, facing the tunnel, a raised slab that might easily have been a sacrificial altar. Above it was a round opening; and, by standing on the stone, we were just able to place our hands on the edge and pull ourselves up. The place now disclosed was a second chamber about twenty feet square, but, instead of sandstone, the walls were of granite, and made by huge blocks so craftily cut that the joints between them were almost invisible. There was no outlet of any kind.

With a shout, Howard seized the lamp Bannister was holding and ran across to where a dark heap had attracted his attention. Diamonds! A heap a foot high! Diamonds of all sizes and shapes! An Aladdin's cave in the twentieth century!

With trembling hands the South African groped among them and lifted some to show us. As he did so he gave a cry—hanging from the back of his right hand were three splinters of dark wood! I sprang forward and plucked them out. One look was enough!

I knew what they were. Calling Bannister to help, I made an improvised tourniquet around Howard's wrist, twisting it tight with the aid of a pencil.

"What is it, then?" the American said, horrified at the fear he read in my eyes.

"*Wourali!*" I answered, "the deadly native poison which the tribes of the Amazon make from a vine and from huge black ants. God grant that it was not fresh, and that this place is damp. Otherwise it kills in twenty minutes or less; and there is no known antidote."

Seizing my knife, I made three large cuts where the points had pricked the hand, and sucked at the wounds, spitting out the blood that came.

"Quick," I said, seizing the superintendent by the shoulders. "We must get him out of here! The natives state that total immersion of the body in water is the only thing that may destroy the effect of the poison."

As we moved towards the opening in the floor a wild burst of laughter startled us, and a huge form filled the hole through which we had entered the treasure-chamber. It was a woman! A gigantic woman! Her head reached far above the opening up which we had dragged ourselves by our hands.

In her hand was a slender tube, which I knew only too well.

So must the Amazons of old have looked to Pizarro and his army of adventurers when they first invaded the new world and found that they had to fight warriors more ferocious than any men could be.

Her lips were drawn back in a dreadful snarl, and her mongol face and long, narrow eyes were terrifying in their cruel expression.

"*Perros*," she cried, "*Perros Americanos*! You will never live to steal the treasure of my forefathers."

At the same moment she raised the tube she held, and I heard the impact of a dart against the wall. It was the dreaded blowpipe, the *ourah* of the Macouchie Indians.

One scratch from the tiny darts was certain death!

"Put your light out," I yelled to the American, but, ignorant or unmindful of the danger, he sprang forward and seized the shiny tube, wrenching it from her hands. He was not to escape unhurt, however. One deadly point was embedded in his wrist.

At the sight ungovernable rage possessed me, and, pulling my pistol from its holster, I fired at the wicked face framed in the black opening.

At the shot it disappeared, and I heard the creature's dreadful laughter echoing back from the passage.

.

How I managed to drag my two companions along that tunnel, after doing for my friend what I had already done for Howard, I do not clearly recall. It was a fantastic and evil dream. Every moment I expected to receive one of those poisoned thorns. Both my charges were now feeling the effect of the *wourali*, the first symptom of which is an overpowering desire to sleep. Dragging, kicking, and shaking them, I finally arrived at the end of the tunnel. Here all was normal. That my shot had not altogether missed I saw by some splashes of blood on the pivoting stone, which was open. In the laboratory I found a coil of rope, and by its aid managed to get my companions to the surface.

Staggering as though drunken, we reached the grounds.

My first care was for my friends—the Frenchman

and his savage partner could wait. The open air revived the poisoned men sufficiently to enable them to run stumbly to where, at the bottom of the hillside, I knew I should find water. Here I forced them both to lie at full length for an hour in the ice-cold stream. Although both complained of the pain it caused them, I kept the bandages bound tightly around their wrists, after pushing a small pebble between the linen and the skin, so that it pressed firmly on the main artery.

Dawn was breaking before we reached the town. My two friends were in a semi-conscious state, and it was with the greatest difficulty only that they had retained their seats in the saddle.

Our arrival caused a tremendous stir, but I refused to make any statement until the local surgeon had arrived.

He highly commended the means I had employed, and gravely informed my friends that without my prompt action they would not have lived to reach the town.

I informed the mayor of what had taken place, and, after seeing the wounded men cared for, I returned to the *hacienda* with a posse of police.

I was well-nigh exhausted, but the desire to be present at the investigation was stronger than my fatigue.

In the laboratory the furnaces had been destroyed !

While one party explored the tunnel, I, with a score of others, followed the direction in which it led, into the woods. Here we came upon a mound of great blocks of stone, still forming a rough Pyramid. There was no entrance to it, and, without dynamite, we could not hope to move those huge stones, the least of which was ten feet square.

I was informed that this was the remains of what had once in a bygone age been a temple, but that no one had



RAVES OF HAY AND MATRESSES BEING ATTACHED TO THE CART BEHIND WHICH WE
APPROACHED THE HOUSE WHERE PONNOI AND DUFOIS WERE AT RAY.

ever suspected the existence of an underground chamber.

We met the exploring party coming out. No trace of any diamonds had been found—not a single stone ; nor has any trace of the Frenchman and his gigantic partner ever been discovered.

.

On my return I found my friends out of danger from the poison itself, but very weak. An intermittent fever, which set in a few days later, made their departure for the coast advisable as soon as they could travel.

The mayor and I talked the matter over at some length during the days that followed. I found that everyone firmly believed that huge treasures were still buried in unknown spots in the inaccessible forests ; which had been hidden there by the Indians to keep them from falling into the hands of the white invaders. He said that undoubtedly some of these hiding-places were known to a few descendants of the former kings ; but that nothing could ever induce them to divulge their hereditary secrets. This woman, he believed, must have become madly infatuated with the little Frenchman, and thus disclosed the secret of the temple to him.

On the boat to Lisbon my companions also discussed the strange events of the past weeks. Howard was of the opinion that the man had realised the difficulty and danger of attempting to sell or tranship such an enormous quantity of jewels, and that he had conceived the idea of utilising his former attempts at diamond-making in order to sell these stones little by little as the products of his furnaces.

Perhaps, also, he had imagined thus to convince the world that he really had solved the problem of artificial diamonds, since no one would guess at the true origin

of the hundreds of stones suddenly pouring from his laboratory.

It is probable that somewhere in another hidden ruin, inaccessible to whites, this man and woman are still living, she happy in that she possesses her love ; he scheming how he may escape and carry with him that fabulous treasure.

THE MOTOR BANDITS

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTOR BANDITS : " LA BANDE TRAGIQUE "

I HAD just returned from New York, where Bannister and I had spent some exciting months investigating the doings of the secret society known as the Black Hand, when the first of the crimes committed by that group of men, who were quickly known as the Motor Bandits, startled all Paris by its callous ferocity and daring.

In France people still shiver when the Bonnot gang is mentioned. It is almost unbelievable that for months those death-dealing bandits and anarchists ran amok, killing and robbing in daylight in the busiest streets of Paris, and jeering at the utmost efforts of the whole police force.

They died as they had lived, violently and terribly, fighting and holding at bay hundreds of well-armed men, reinforced by machine-guns and dynamite. Those were exciting days ; life seemed cheap, indeed, and brave acts were performed by simple men in simple fashion—days when law and order had become things of the past, and every man went armed.

.

My part in the drama began when one day I engaged a young man named Charles Bonnot as mechanic and chauffeur. He was a likeable enough young fellow, and after a trial run in my car I was so impressed by his skill that I took him into my service there and then, and introduced him to my laboratory foreman.

He was with me for about six months, and served me

well, although he had one great fault. He could not bear a reprimand, and would scowl and mutter to himself at the slightest word of disapproval.

After a while I noticed that he had become very friendly with my mechanical draughtsman Ducret, and this I did not like, for reasons which I will explain. Ducret had been with me for over a year, and I had no fault to find with his work, yet I felt that there was something wrong with the man.

His pale face and extraordinary mop of fair hair alone gave him a strange enough appearance, but his most startling feature was his eyes. They were of so pale a blue as to be almost white, and, with their red-rimmed lids, appeared as if he never slept. In their depths was a strange, weary, haunted look.

One day, when talking to Monsieur Bertillon, the famous criminologist, I mentioned Ducret, and described him. Monsieur Bertillon promised to look him up in his portrait-gallery, to see if by chance he was known. Right enough, the next day I was called to the telephone and given some information which made me feel very uneasy.

Ducret was not his real name at all. He was Albert Erlebach, a Swiss, and had been noted in his country for his anarchistic tendencies.

There was nothing serious against Ducret, but he had been caught in the toils of the French anarchists, headed and led by that millionaire fanatic Fromentin. He had been made editor and printer-in-chief of a seditious rag called *L'Idée Libre*, or *Free Thought*, and his home was a meeting-place for the worst characters of the anarchist movement. I immediately called Ducret into my office and asked him to be careful not to make a show of his

lawless theories before my workmen, as they were all good men, and I did not want them to be contaminated.

Poor Ducret burst into tears at my words, and assured me that his dearest wish was to be free of the whole business. These men frightened him, he said. In Bern, where he was born, anarchy was merely an ideal. No one ever attempted to put it into practice. These Parisians instead were violent and bloodthirsty, and the worst of them all were Bonnot and his bosom friend, Raymond Callemin, nicknamed "*La Science*" (The scientist). This Raymond was only a boy of eighteen like Bonnot, but already he was constantly urging the others to practice what anarchy preached. I could hardly believe that Jules Bonnot, the quiet, if sulky, boy, could really be such a desperate character. However, I did not wish to risk having my honest and steady men interfered with, and decided to discharge Bonnot at once. I knew Fromentin and his fanatic partisans only too well.

I promised not to repeat what Ducret had told me, but at once called Bonnot and gave him notice, informing him that I no longer required his services as chauffeur. He left the same day, muttering threats against me and all *sacré* capitalists.

The next day Ducret did not come to work, but sent me a note saying that his life had been threatened for informing me about Bonnot. He begged me, nevertheless, not to mention this to my friends at the Sûreté. I immediately went to where Ducret was supposed to be living, but found that he had moved away some weeks before. Well, after all, Ducret was free to do as he pleased, and it was not for me to interfere.

A few weeks later all Paris was startled by a most audacious and brutal aggression—the first of a series that quickly made the Motor Bandits, as they were at once called, a name at the mention of which people trembled and shuddered.

One morning about 10 a.m. a bank-messenger named Caby was walking down the Rue Ordner, one of the busiest streets of Paris, towards a branch of the Crédit Foncier in that street. He was dressed in the usual and well-known French bank-messenger's uniform, and wore the antique three-cornered hat. Under his arm he carried a leather case, attached to his wrist by a steel chain and padlock, which is the usual custom. This case contained 30,000 francs in banknotes, and drafts amounting to another 50,000 francs.

Nearly opposite the main entrance to the bank a grey Dion-Bouton car had been stationed for over an hour. At the wheel was a young man, with his cap pulled down over his eyes, smoking cigarette after cigarette. Inside the car were three other men, who appeared to be waiting for someone. As the bank-messenger approached, two of the men got out and walked slowly towards him.

Naturally no one had paid much attention to them. A waiting car in such a busy thoroughfare was nothing unusual. When within two yards of Caby one of the two men suddenly pointed a big automatic pistol at the startled messenger, and said in a cold, level voice : " Give me your bag, Gaby, or you're a dead man ! "

Caby turned to run, tightly clutching his precious bag. Seeing this, without a moment's hesitation the man with the pistol levelled it and fired twice, both bullets striking the unfortunate employee, who staggered and fell to the ground.

The other man sprang forward as he fell and snatched up the case containing the money, wrenching and twisting at the steel chain, which was doubly padlocked—both to the case and to Caby's wrist.

Before any one of the startled spectators could make a movement to help the unfortunate man on the ground the man with the pistol drew a second weapon from his pocket and covered the crowd, threatening them with instant death if they interfered.

Meanwhile his companion, seeing that the bag could not be wrenched off, took a knife from his pocket and cut away the leather from the lock. The whole thing did not take a minute. The young fellow at the wheel had in the meantime started his engine, and the third man, who had till then remained inactive, held the door open with one hand, and with a pistol in the other also threatened the now rapidly growing crowd. As soon as the robber with the bag was safely in the car the driver let in his clutch, and as the vehicle swung round, gathering speed, the other two jumped on to the running-board and climbed in.

Some of the more courageous of the horrified spectators ran after the grey car, while a brewer's dray tried to bar its way. Coolly and methodically the three men at once began shooting at those who tried to stop them, one man firing from a hole in the back of the hood, and the other two, each from a window.

One of the shots knocked off the hat of the driver of the brewer's waggon; another bullet grazed one of the horses. These of course began plunging and rearing, and kept the driver fully occupied. Swerving, and running on to the pavement, with shots spitting from both sides of it, the grey car, now at full speed, scattered

the people right and left, and, most skilfully steered, was away and out of sight in a few moments.

Seeing that all pursuit was hopeless, the crowd gathered round the wounded man on the ground, who was now unconscious and bleeding from two terrible wounds in the chest. Lifting him carefully, they carried him into the bank. So quickly had the whole tragedy taken place that the employees and clerks were only just coming to the door to see what had happened.

As everyone knows, Paris still maintains the gates, leading to and from the city, where all cars going out or coming in have to stop for a duty which is there levied on petrol. All the gate officers were at once warned to hold up a grey limousine, number 701B2.

By midday every gate leading from Paris was watched by a posse of plain-clothes men armed with revolvers. There was no sign of the grey car anywhere. In Paris itself a hundred Sûreté officers searched high and low, but the automobile and the men remained mysteriously hidden. The wounded messenger was transported to the hospital of La Pitié in a critical condition, and could not be questioned that day.

On the morning after the aggression I was asked to call on my friend Dufresne, of the Sûreté, who questioned me about Ducret and Bonnot. I gave him all the information I could, and was told the whole story of what had taken place. Monsieur Dufresne had an idea that the *Idée Libre* anarchists might have had a hand in this.

I gave Monsieur Dufresne a photograph of Bonnot driving my electric brougham, which had been taken shortly before he left me. Later in the day I went to Monsieur Bertillon and looked through his anthropometrical gallery of photographs, to see if I could find

any that resembled the descriptions we had of the four bandits sufficiently to help us in our search.

Certainly the appearance of the chauffeur of the grey car, as described by the driver of the brewer's waggon, tallied marvellously with that of Bonnot as I had known him. Characteristic of him, too, were his coolness and his skill in driving.

Whilst I was resting and reading that evening in my little country house at Chaville the telephone bell rang, and the voice of Ducret, terribly agitated, but still recognisable, asked me if I could come at once to the Passage de Clichy, No. 15, as he had something important to tell me.

Would I promise not to inform the police, however, until I had heard what he had to say? I was quite safe, he said, if I came alone. I immediately got out my car, and, slipping a revolver into my pocket, I drove to the neighbourhood mentioned. The place I arrived at was a narrow, tiny alley, unlit and dirty. Leaving the car, I felt my way along in the dark until I got to a small window from which a light streamed out under the shutters.

It was No. 15. There was neither bell nor knocker, but the door was unlocked. Pushing it open, I entered a dark passage, at the end of which I found a room containing hand printing-presses, and my former employee, Ducret, busily at work setting up some pages. At my entrance he sprang back, pale and startled. I could see that the man was violently afraid. As soon as he saw who it was he tiptoed to the door and listened for a moment, then, returning to where I was still standing with my hand in the pocket containing my pistol, he placed one trembling hand on my arm and whispered :
‘ Callemin La Science and a man named Garnier did

it. I know much more, but I dare not tell. You may even have been seen coming here. Luckily they know I worked for you, so that I can say you called to ask me to come back to your laboratory. Do something, Monsieur, for heaven's sake, for even now they are plotting other and more dreadful crimes."

"Who else was there?" I asked in a whisper also. "There were four of them."

"Jules Bonnot was the driver; the other was a man called Dieudonné."

"Where are they hiding?"

"Ah, Monsieur, I dare not, I dare not tell." Then, speaking loudly, he added, "No, I cannot return and work for you. It is useless. My life belongs to the *Idée Libre* and the cause of anarchy."

Taking the hint, I argued with him in a loud voice, offering him good wages if he would return; then, after some further talk, I took my leave. I had proof as I left that Ducret's fears were well founded, for while I cranked up my car I saw several dark shadows glide from the little alley. It was evident that not only had my arrival been seen, but that we had been watched and overheard whilst talking. For a moment I felt inclined to return, for I was uneasy about Ducret, only I feared that if I went back it might make matters worse, so I stopped at the nearest *poste de police*, after making sure that no one had followed me, and requested the *commissaire* to post a man near the Passage de Clichy, in case Ducret needed help. This the *commissaire* promised to do.

I thought it better that I should not be seen to go to headquarters at once, so, instead of driving to the Quai D'Orsay, where I knew that I should find Monsieur

Guichard, the chief of the Sûreté, or his deputy, Monsieur Jouin (who was later to die at the hands of Bonnot) I drove home, and then communicated with them over the telephone.

Early next morning I went with Monsieur Jouin to the hospital, and there, as Caby was now conscious, we handed him half a dozen photographs of various suspects. He looked through them listlessly enough until he came to a picture of Garnier. With trembling hands he held it out for us to see, and screamed: "That is the man—the man with the dreadful eyes. I shall never forget those eyes, and the way he looked at me when he said, 'Give me your bag, Caby.' It is the man who shot me. I am sure of it."

The doctor made us leave at once, as the poor fellow was so agitated, and as we went we heard him still repeating, "Those eyes—those terrible eyes."

The information Ducret had given was confirmed. Garnier, Raymond La Science, Bonnot, and Dieudonné were the four who had attacked and robbed the bank-messenger, and Garnier was the man who had shot him.

His photograph, which the Sûreté possessed, since he had been convicted several times for minor crimes, was immediately published everywhere and a reward offered for his arrest, but nothing further was heard of the bandits for some days. Then suddenly a fresh series of crimes threw Paris into a panic.

A man was found early one morning lying in the road leading to the little suburb of Bezons. He was bleeding from several wounds, and dying. The numerous pools of blood and the traces of a desperate struggle showed that he had put up a good fight before going down. He died whilst being taken to a farmhouse near by, but gasped out

at the last, " Bonnot shot me. *Ah, canaille*, false friend ! Would not divide."

The letters which were found in the dead man's pockets proved him to have been a militant anarchist, and evidently one of Bonnot's accomplices. Hardly had we been informed of this when news came in that a notary's office at Pontoise had been broken into and the notary himself attacked by an armed gang, who had shot him, wounded his clerk, and escaped with a sum of money in a motor car.

That same day some peasants found a grey car abandoned in a field near Rouen. It was the famous grey car, but in a terrible state.

Upon investigation, the meter was found to indicate 700 kilometres. The owner of the car, from whom it had been stolen, said that the meter had been reset the day of the theft, so that the car must have covered nearly a thousand kilometres since that time, when all trace of the robbers had been lost.

Monsieur Jouin had barely returned from his investigations, and was telling me about them, when a motor-cycle policeman arrived in hot haste to say that a garage in Paris had been broken into, and a racing-car stolen by six masked men.

The cleaner at the garage had been shot, but was not dead, although he had only a short time to live. We hurried to the ambulance-station, where the man was, only to be told when we got there that he had just died. The doctor had taken notes of his last words, however, and again we knew that the men we sought had committed this foul crime.

That same day at about four o'clock a racing-car was being driven in reckless fashion down the Rue du Harve,

opposite the railway-station of St. Lazare, the centre of Paris.

The policeman on point duty, whose name was also, curiously enough, Garnier, blew his whistle, as a signal for them to stop, but no notice was taken of him. In avoiding an imminent collision with a motor-bus the driver of the racing-car jammed the brakes on so brutally that he stopped his engine. The policeman, seeing this, ran to the car, and began remonstrating with them on the way they were driving.

In this car were four men. Not a word did they say in reply. The policeman pointed to the kerb, and told them to draw up there, for he was going to take their number and names, because they had not stopped when he told them to. The driver got down obediently enough, still without saying a word, and restarted his motor. The crowd that had gathered began to argue with the officer, saying, "They are foreigners; they don't understand or speak French; let them go."

The constable, however, followed the car to the kerb, and, seeing that they gave no further trouble, took out his note-book. Instantly the man at the wheel pressed down the accelerator, and the car, a very powerful one, jumped forward. The courageous policeman sprang on to the running-board and tried to seize the steering-wheel. At the same moment the men in the back of the car, still without saying a word, drew heavy automatics. Four flashes followed, and the unfortunate constable fell to the ground mortally wounded. At once the car darted forward, and before the spectators, frozen with horror, could think of acting, it was far away, hidden by the stream of traffic.

Immediately all was confusion. Several taxi-drivers

swung their cars round and tried to follow, but the traffic is so dense at that hour and in that central artery of Paris that they only hindered and added to the confusion. One of the taxis unfortunately ran down a young girl, and two others barely avoided a collision with a tramcar. Once again the murderers got clear away.

In the meantime the policeman Garnier had been carried to the nearest chemist, where he died within a few minutes. The car was the same Panhard that had earlier that day been stolen from the garage.

Paris clamoured loudly for the arrest of these monsters, and all the forces of the Paris Scotland Yard were mobilised, but again, unbelievable as it may seem, all trace of the bandits was lost. They had mysteriously disappeared. The Panhard was found two days later in a ditch, hopelessly smashed.

All the known retreats of the anarchists were of course watched. Finally, after several anxious days, Dufresne telephoned and told me that they had found Dieudonné. He was arrested at his brother's house, and the brother had also been arrested for hiding him.

It was arranged to take Caby, who was now able to walk, to the Dépôt, and confront Dieudonné with him. I went there at once. The confrontation was a fiasco. Dieudonné was placed amongst several men, and Caby came in. After walking up and down the row of men he stopped opposite Dieudonné and said :

“ That is the man who shot me.”

“ But,” said Monsieur Jouin, “ you said before that it was Garnier who shot you.”

Of course, Dieudonné made the most of the mistake, and protested that he was entirely innocent. It was

true that he was an anarchist, but he had never committed a crime, nor had he been one of the four aggressors of the messenger Gaby.

Although Dieudonné was afterwards put through a searching third degree in the room that the French papers so sarcastically call the "*Room of Spontaneous Confessions*," we learned nothing that could help us to find the others.

Two more crimes followed, which were palpably the work of this ruthless gang of desperadoes. Then came the climax !

A chauffeur and a mechanic were taking a new racing-car by road to the owner at Compiègne. They were seen by an innkeeper on the outskirts of Paris, where they stopped to take some refreshments. A little farther on the road there was a small hut, used by the roadmenders for keeping their tools. The labourers in the field near by had noticed two men near the hut, who were apparently surveyors, for they had the usual implements, and appeared to be taking measurements. The story of the tragedy, as afterwards related by a farmer driving to town with a load of hay, is as follows :

As he drew near to this hut he saw the racing-car coming towards him. Drawing to one side, he got down to hold his horse, and waited, because his horse was restive and afraid of motor-cars.

The two men with the tape and discs now threw these down and stepped into the middle of the road, waving their arms and shouting to the men in the car to stop. The chauffeur did so, and the car came to a halt just opposite the little hut. At the moment that it came to a stop four other men, who till now had been hidden iⁿ side, ran out and began firing at the chauffeur and his

mechanic. The latter jumped down and tried to hide behind the car, but he was too late. Mortally wounded, he only staggered a few steps and then fell.

The chauffeur, who was more courageous, tried to restart the car, but a hail of bullets, from all sides, toppled him sideways over the seat—dead! Jumping into his place, one of the men seized the wheel, while the others callously threw the dead chauffeur into the road and jumped in behind. Gathering speed, the racer was soon out of sight.

Attracted by the fusillade, the labourers in the fields now came running up, and found the old farmer hanging to the reins of his horse, which was trying to bolt, and the two unfortunate mechanics lying huddled in the roadway, both dead.

The news of this outrage had not got to Paris before a second and even greater crime was committed in the beautiful little sporting town of Chantilly. I have the story from a British jockey who was an eye-witness to the outrage, and this is what he saw :

At about twelve noon, when he was taking some horses, entered in the forthcoming races, back to the stables, he saw a big, powerful automobile swing round into the main street of Chantilly. It was going at tremendous speed, and as it passed him he heard one of the men in it shout, "Stop! Stop! We have gone too far. There is the bank."

The car turned and came back to the door of the Société Générale, the biggest banking-house in France. Instead of stopping there, however, it went round in a half-circle and slowed down, facing the road to Paris.

Several men sprang out and rushed into the bank,

where, without a word, they began firing at the clerks busy over their work.

The cashier tried to take a revolver from a drawer, but fell dead, riddled with bullets. Four of the employees were killed, and five others wounded. Jumping over the counters, the desperadoes began collecting all the money from the cashier's desk and the open safes. Meanwhile, outside, the driver sat tightly gripping the steering-wheel, his motor running, and a terrible expression on his face. His companion, a fellow with a shock of flaming red hair, stood at the back of the car facing the street, from where people now came running. He held a double-barrelled shotgun in his hand, and began shooting indiscriminately towards all sides, firing from the hip, pivoting and reloading rapidly. At that the jockey became frightened for his horses, and tried to get away, but he was still near enough to see the end.

The men inside had gathered all they could, and came running out. Without a word the driver started off as they stumbled into the car.

The red-haired man with the shotgun ran after them, still firing towards the now maddened and yelling crowd. As the motor gathered speed he was caught up by the men at the back and dragged in ; then, amid the yells and imprecations of the spectators of this outrage, the car disappeared on the road to Paris. Once more the automobile was found abandoned the next day, at Asnieres, and the criminals had again escaped.

That morning they had killed six men in cold blood and wounded eight others. Over fifty bullets were accounted for and found. They had also stolen eighty thousand francs in gold and notes from the bank.

The Société Générale at once offered a reward of a

hundred thousand francs for the capture of the murderers.

Volunteers, attracted by the huge reward, flocked to the Sûreté headquarters from all sides, offering to help.

Paris was in an uproar, and all the newspapers abused the police for their failure to effect the arrest of these apaches.

.

On the day following the murders at Chantilly, I called on my friend Monsieur Guichard, and found him in conference with Monsieur Bertillon. A letter had just arrived from Garnier, the man who was one of the four who attacked the bank-messenger. It was worthy of its writer!

In the foulest words he jeered at the police and their efforts to trace him. He defied them and made fun of them. The letter had actually been posted in Paris. It also mentioned the huge reward offered for the capture of the bandits, and stated that no sum, however large, would ever tempt any anarchist to sell the others.

Finally, in the letter Garnier made an appointment with the Chief of Police for the next evening outside a well-known cinema-house, daring the authorities to come there and take him. This missive was signed "Garnier, Anarchist," and, to prove that it was no fraud, under the name was a series of finger-prints made in the approved Bertillon fashion.

These finger-prints were examined by Monsieur Bertillon, and were found to correspond exactly with the police records of Garnier. There was no possible doubt—Garnier himself had written the letter. He also stated that it was he who had shot Caby, and that Dieudonné, who had already been arrested, was innocent.

Monsieur Guichard was of the opinion that the letter had been posted in Paris by a confederate, in order to lead the police to believe that the criminals were hiding there, but that it was merely a ruse to mislead them. He did not believe it to be possible, with everyone searching for them, that they would dare to remain in the capital. Monsieur Bertillon did not share his opinion. I then proposed calling on Ducret, who would be able to tell me something. Both eagerly agreed to this suggestion. In the afternoon I called on Bannister, and with his help was transformed into a villainous-looking loafer. Bannister insisted on coming with me, so together we took the Metro to the Place Clichy.

With dirty cigarette-stumps hanging from our lips and hair plastered down on our foreheads, we slouched along the alleys and by-ways leading to the Passage de Clichy. There was no one to be found at the printing-room where Ducret worked, nor did the place appear to have been occupied for some time.

Coming out, a woman stopped us. She was a real *gigolette*, as the female friends of the Paris apaches are called. In the vilest *argot* she told us that it was no use looking for the *mouchard* (informer). He was being taken care of. If we had come to *ziguiller* (kill) him, we were wasting our time. We did not dare to question the girl, for we knew that she would immediately become suspicious. There was nothing for it but to return to headquarters.

After discussing the matter, Monsieur Guichard decided to keep the appointment which Garnier had had the audacity to make. Not that he imagined the bandit would show himself, although with these men anything as possible, but he thought that some members of the

gang might be there to enjoy Guichard's discomfiture.

He therefore placed a number of plain-clothes men in every street leading to the cinema, and arranged to go openly himself. At a given time he was to be insulted by some loafers (his own men), and a riot started. This, he hoped, would draw a crowd, and make a haul possible.

I at once elected to go along. The ruse was partly successful. Monsieur Guichard, who was well known in Paris to all and sundry, waited a few minutes in front of the cinema. While standing there some very evil-looking characters came up and began to abuse him, and one of them knocked his hat off. A crowd quickly gathered. At the height of the *mêlée* a cordon of police surrounded them all, and closed the street at both ends. Thus over one hundred and fifty people were rounded up, who all had to give an account of themselves. We actually caught three well-known anarchists suspected of being in touch with the Bonnot gang, and also two women.

In the possession of one of the men a cloak-room ticket was discovered. The *Sûreté* immediately claimed the bag to which the ticket referred, and it was found to contain the shares and drafts taken from the bank-messenger, Caby. The rooms of all five were searched, and many interesting facts came to light. Two of the men, Rodriguez and Belonie, were agents for the Bonnot gang. Their work was to pass and change bills and drafts, and generally get rid of stolen property. The papers found led us to Carouy, who was recognised as having been one of the six men in the Chantilly drama. The net was beginning to close around them.

Carouy tried to commit suicide when taken to the cells.

Whilst being undressed, a warder saw him carry his hand to his mouth and chew something. He was at once seized, his mouth forced open, and a piece of corrosive sublimate was found therein. Carouy yelled and threatened, and swore that the executioners would never have his head. He would kill himself somehow or other. He kept his word, as I shall tell later.

From the papers found and the skilful questions put to Carouy we also discovered that the man with the red hair, who used the shotgun at Chantilly, was a carpenter from Bezons named Soudy. He was caught some days later in a low dance-hall.

According to the description we had of Soudy, it was clear that he alone of them all was no Parisian, but hailed from Brittany. Although really not my work, I went to my friend Bannister and persuaded him to come along for a tour of the big markets, where all the country produce comes in, and where many of the porters and women are Bretons.

Bannister did not think that the man could disguise himself successfully. I was not so sure, however. The head of the gang was called "La Science," because he had studied at a technical school and therefore had knowledge and intelligence of a sort. We both used Bannister's make-up room, and changed once more into a worthy pair of rogues. For two nights we drifted from dance-hall to dance-hall.

The Breton accent is very marked, and wherever we heard it, we stopped and invited everyone to drink. Late the second night we came into a place called Mort aux Flics (Death to the Police), such names being frequently met with in Paris. Here we noticed a young fellow, very drunk, who was boasting that no one could

arrest him. This interested us, and we joined the crowd around him. His hair was black, however, not red.

I was struck by his words, "If they try to get me, *mes amis*, I have a *canardeuse* that will settle a few of them." *Canardeuse* means a shotgun. Quietly we left the place and telephoned to headquarters. The man was arrested as he came out of the place, and so skilfully was it done that he could make no struggle. At the police-station it was found that the roots of his hair were red. The hair was dyed.

It was Soudy of the Chantilly shotgun! One more in the net!

Among Soudy's belongings, in his room, were found a double-barrelled gun, a dozen dynamite cartridges, and three automatic pistols, with five hundred rounds and twelve loading-clips. The best find, however, were some letters from a woman. These gave us a clue to where we might possibly find the ringleader, Callemín La Science.

For several days we hunted without success, and then one day—passing along the Rue Royale, of all places—I saw a young fellow on a bicycle who looked to me very much like the man we were searching for. I followed him in my car. He seemed quite carefree, and entered a large house of the better kind in the Avenue Niel.

A watch was kept, but we had to go carefully to work, for the danger to other people in the house was great. It was decided not to attempt anything in the building itself. The report that came from the watchers soon proved that I had not been mistaken, and that this seemingly quiet, inoffensive young fellow was the redoubtable "La Science," the brains and leader of the desperadoes. From information received we knew

that he carried powerful explosives always on his person.

A trap was set for him. Several detectives were hidden behind the entrance door. In front of the entrance some workmen pulled up the pavement and got busy with the pipes leading into the place, making it impossible to wheel a bicycle into the house.

About 10 a.m. we perceived "La Science" approaching. Seeing the workmen busy, he got down from his bicycle, and, leaning it against the kerb, stepped gingerly over the broken ground. On the instant that he entered the door his legs were seized and pulled from under him by the men in the hole. Four others from the doorway threw themselves on to him. He was powerless to move. It was well we had acted so suddenly.

In his jacket pockets were four Mauser pistols, in his hip pocket a Browning, also a bottle of nitro-glycerine in an inside pocket. His bicycle was a veritable arsenal. The tool-bag contained two detonating bombs. He had certainly determined to sell his life dearly, and without the ruse of the workmen below-ground, he would have had time to do so.

Now at last we had made a capture that was worth while, and we thought that the end was in sight. In the room of Callemine La Science, which was immediately ransacked, we found two thousand nickel bullet cartridges and more explosives; also six thousand francs in banknotes; and, besides these, indications enough to round up the other members of the gang.

Within a week we had nineteen men and three women under lock and key, and Monsieur Guichard began to lose some of that gloomy expression that had taken the place of his usual good-humoured smile. Unfortunately,

Bonnot and Garnier and several others were still free and at any moment a fresh tragedy might take place. It came a few days later !

Acting on information obtained in the room of "La Science," Monsieur Jouin, the well-known deputy Chief of Police, accompanied by Sergeant Colmar and a policeman, went to Petit Ivry, a riverside locality, and entered the house of a man called Gauzy, a smith. They questioned him as to whom he had living there.

On being told that there was no one, they proceeded to search the house. Monsieur Jouin, who was unarmed, went upstairs and pushed open the door of a small room. The window was closed by a shutter, and the place was almost dark. Lighting a match, he began to look around. As he stepped forward the door closed behind him. He wheeled, and saw a man crouching before it.

With a shout to his two companions below, he at once closed with the shadowy figure. The man cleverly eluded him, and butted him in the stomach. Staggering back, Jouin aimed a blow at his assailant with his walking-stick, breaking it.

At that moment Sergeant Colmar burst into the room. Two flashes spurted from the corner where the unknown was at bay. The unhappy sergeant staggered backwards out of the doorway and crashed headlong over the rotten bannisters and down the stairs. Jouin did not hesitate, although unarmed, and again grappled with his man. Another shot followed, and a terrible struggle for possession of the pistol began. The policeman, who had caught up Sergeant Colmar and placed him in a sitting position against the wall, now rushed upstairs and dashed open the shutter. At the instant that the room was flooded with light a cry burst from his lips : "Bonnot !

It is Bonnot ! ” Before he could help, both the struggling men fell to the ground, and two more shots cracked in quick succession. Monsieur Jouin relaxed his grip and sprawled sideways. He was dead, shot through the heart !

Bonnot also appeared to be dead. His face was covered with blood, and he did not move. His eyes were closed. Horrified at the death of his Chief, and under the impression that Bonnot had shot himself, the policeman ran out of the room, shouting for help. Below there was no one, and it was some minutes before two passing police on cycles could be brought back by the half-crazed man to the scene of the tragedy.

On the ground floor Sergeant Colmar was huddled against the stairs, bleeding from a wound in the stomach and dying fast. In the room above the deputy Chief was stretched out in a pool of blood—but Bonnot was gone !

As was afterwards ascertained, he had not been wounded at all, but, ignorant of the number of men there were below he had feigned death. Half-hidden as he had been under the body of his victim, and drenched in his blood, this had been easy. As soon as he saw the policeman running for help, he had escaped by climbing out of the window, and dropping to the ground on the opposite side of the house.

.

Not far from the scene of this tragedy there lived a very strange community. A fanatic millionaire, Fromentin, who had already had several affairs with the police, was a militant anarchist. He possessed a large tract of ground at Petit Ivry. This had been divided into allotments, with small houses built on each. These

houses all anarchists could use almost rent free, if they really were anarchists.

To this place we now went. Before one of the small buildings a Russian known by the name of Dubois was repairing a motor-cycle, and amusing himself by explaining and initiating a boy of about five into the mysteries of mechanics. As we approached he looked up. Guessing who we were, he dropped his tools and drew a revolver, shouting to the child. "Run! Save yourself!" The child did not move.

One of the detectives covered Dubois, and ordered him to put up his hands. A shot whistled past his head in reply, but it did not come from Dubois. It had been fired from a window on the first floor, and, looking up, we saw the rage-convulsed face of the man we sought—Bonnot! A veritable fusillade exploded from all of us, and Dubois staggered back. Then, courageously enough, he picked up the child and ran with him around the house.

The Nid Rouge (Red Nest), as the place was aptly enough called, was at once surrounded. Nothing further was done for the moment, for when we telephoned to headquarters to ask for riflemen, Monsieur Lepine, the energetic and famous Prefect of Police, gave strict orders that nothing was to be attempted until he himself came out there.

In a very short time Monsieur Lepine arrived in a powerful car. He at once began to organise the attack. He wanted no more of his men killed, he said. A cordon of gendarmes with carbines encircled the Nid Rouge. Lying flat on the ground, they took cover where they could. A hundred or more Municipal Guards formed a barrier to keep the curious sightseers back, for as soon

as the news was spread by the papers that Bonnot was cornered hundreds of cyclists and motor-cars full of people flocked to the scene. Bonnot and Dubois commanded both sides of the house. From a window each could shoot without exposing himself. We knew that they were well armed with heavy automatics and Mauser pistols, and had plenty of ammunition. We knew, too, that there were bombs to fear as well.

Every time a head bobbed up or a man showed himself a shot cracked from the Nid Rouge, and soon a running fire began from both sides.

Nearly two hundred guns were called into action by Monsieur Lepine, and for hours shooting was continuous. The house was strongly built, and none of our shots could take effect except by the windows.

Finally, seeing how useless it was to continue shooting at a brick house, and as no artillery could be used in so crowded a locality, it was suggested that the house should be blown up with dynamite.

The problem was how to place the dynamite against the house. There was no cover whatever, and the heavy nickel-shod Mauser bullets could pierce almost anything at that short range.

Then it was I bethought myself of an Indian stratagem I had often heard my father tell of, which had been used by the Sioux against the American troops. I went to Lepine and asked him to obtain a bow and arrows. On to the arrows I intended to attach burning rags steeped in tar and petrol, and then shoot these at the roof and into the windows, so as to set fire to the house. Unfortunately Monsieur Lepine had never heard of this Indian trick, and laughed at what he called a childish idea, although Jannister also urged him to let me try it. Monsieur

Lepine was stubborn ; he had an idea of his own, and would try that first.

A farm waggon was obtained and loaded with bales of hay. Hay was also tied with ropes to the sides and front, and large bales left hanging in front and behind. Then mattresses were requisitioned and attached to each side of the waggon. Thus protected, Monsieur Lepine felt sure that two men could approach the house behind the cart and place a charge of dynamite against one of the walls.

When the cart was ready, the horse was put into the shafts and volunteers called for. A Lieutenant Fontan and myself offered to go, and were accepted. The crowd, which was kept back by the guards, yelled and shouted their approval, and slowly we backed the cart towards the house so as not to risk the horse. Both of us walked behind in single file.

Our legs must have been visible, though, for soon bullets zipped and ploughed into the ground around our feet.

When we were within a short distance of the house a bullet ploughed a furrow in one of the legs of the horse.

The poor beast reared and snorted, and the lieutenant and I had to hang on to the bridle to prevent the cart from turning around and thus exposing us.

Some anxious minutes passed while we tried to calm the terrified animal. During the struggle I must have been visible from the house, for two shots spat viciously from the window. My hat was whirled from my head, and a sickening blow in my right shoulder sent me staggering against Lieutenant Fontan. Blood began pouring down my sleeve. A bullet had passed right through my arm, numbing it completely.

Had it been an ordinary revolver shot, my arm would have been rendered useless, but the nickel-jacketed projectiles used in the Mauser pistol make a small, clean hole unless they happen to strike a bone.

It was impossible to bind up the wound, for we could not let go of the horse.

Finally we got so close to the house that the two men inside could no longer shoot without showing themselves. We backed the cart right against the wall, and then crawled under it and fixed the charge of dynamite into a space where a pipe had once been.

I lit the fuse, and at a trot we drove away. The fuse had been calculated for five minutes, and, stop-watch in hand, I waited breathlessly for the explosion. Nothing happened. At the end of ten minutes we guessed that the fuse must have been faulty, and had gone out. The whole thing had to be done a second time. My shoulder had, in the meantime, been bound up, and I could just use my arm. I insisted on going again, and so once more the lieutenant and I backed the horse towards the house.

This time the besiegers kept up a violent fire at the windows to prevent the men inside from aiming. Again we fixed the charge and lit the fuse, but we waited to make sure that it was burning well. The excitement of watching us had made the snipers careless of their duty, and for a few seconds their fire ceased. That moment nearly cost us our lives, for as we started to trot back a hand reached out, and something black came flying down from the window. It missed the front of the cart, but exploded with a terrific crash on the back. The hay was hurled to all sides. We were thrown to the ground, and the waggon overturned, while the horse, free from the traces, bolted in panic. Almost at once our mine went off, and we

were covered with flying stones and gravel. With a shout the gendarmes rushed towards the house.

I scrambled up and helped the lieutenant to his feet. Running to the breach in the wall, we were just in time to see the end.

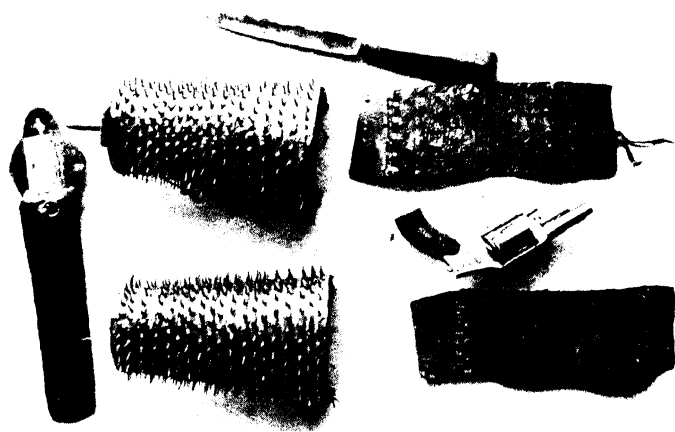
Dubois was lying on the floor dead, and had been dead for hours. Bonnot alone had been keeping us at bay, running from window to window and shooting. He was found lying at the back of a trestle bed, and, as Sergeant Fleury approached, Bonnot fired his last shot—into the ceiling.

He was a mass of wounds, and, though alive, could live but a short time. He was conscious, however, and as he was lifted and placed on a stretcher he sobbed out, "Swine! Oh, you swine!"

He died a few minutes after his admission into hospital, where he had been taken by car. There now remained only Garnier and Villemin, the last two!

In the room where Dubois and Bonnot had made such a desperate stand we found twenty big pistols, five thousand rounds of ammunition, and twenty bombs filled with nitro-glycerine. In a corner there was a big case of blasting powder with a long fuse attached to it. This fuse was actually burning when we rushed into the room, and was not noticed by anyone. When found, it had already burned down to within two feet of the powder, and had then gone out because a short part of it was wet with the blood that had flowed from Dubois, who was lying near it. But for that strange and gruesome accident, everyone in the house would have been blown to atoms.

A letter written by Bonnot when he saw that the end was near was found, nailed to the wall. It is a document



1. LACOMBE, STRIPPED OF HIS SPIKED SUTI, PHOTOGRAPHED BETWEEN TWO POLICE OFFICERS AT THE DÉPÔT.
2. THE CUFFS LACOMBE WORE, THESE WERE MADE TO TAKE OFF SEPARATELY, AS ALSO THE SHOULDER STRAPS.



PRINCESS MARIE MARGUERITE FAHMY,
who shot her Egyptian husband at the Savoy Hotel.

that gives one a vivid insight into the mentality and psychology of such men. It is not greed that causes them to commit their horrid crimes, but vanity. "My name is trumpeted to the four corners of the world," he wrote. He felt sure that this would be read by all his comrades still hiding like rats in the dark, and they would call him a hero and a martyr.

Their crazed brains and fanatic hatred of law and order invert all preconceived ideas of right and wrong.

The most powerful deterrent of such sporadic crimes would be a contemptuous silence. It is the publicity given to their exploits that attracts and flatters these outlaws.

Entire pages in the daily papers record their every word and deed. Their portraits are published everywhere, and finally the guillotine is erected in public, where, surrounded by admiring friends, they make their tragic exit from this world. Therefore it is a wise law that make an execution in England a sinister, ugly, soul-shaking ceremony, carried out within the dark and gloomy cell of a prison. In Paris, not so long ago, all executions were an excuse for debauches. Seekers of novel and morbid pleasures rented rooms of which the windows overlooked the square where the guillotine was erected. Unspeakable orgies took place during the night preceding the execution, which culminated in the drinking of champagne and toasting the condemned man at the instant of his death.

All his friends of the underworld were there also, held in check by mounted police. They had come to see how he would die ; and as his head fell into the basket, placed there in readiness, yells of "*Vive l'Anarchie !*" would vibrate from hundreds of raucous voices.

Thus, to marry the "widow," as the Parisian apache calls the dreadful instrument invented by Dr. Guillotin, because her husbands always die, is considered a glorious thing, and not an abomination.

The only excuse that I have to offer for writing about such men myself is that the events described happened many years ago, and I hope that I have shown them to be, not heroes, but monsters.

.

Well, Garnier and Villemin had yet to be found, and we hoped, if possible, to take them alive.

Police spies were everywhere, and as place after place was raided the circle in which they had of necessity to be found became smaller and smaller.

It at last became apparent that they had not left the city and certainly they were more surely hidden there than in the suburbs.

As we afterwards discovered, both of them had been going openly about Paris, but with their appearance so altered that people did not recognise them. I kept closely in touch with all that went on, and thus, one evening, I was supping with my old friend Dufresne when a message was brought to him that Garnier had been met by some people who had at once informed the Sûreté.

When we got to the place where he had been seen we found that he had indeed been there, but that no man or woman had dared to interfere with him, so terrified were they of these men. We were determined, however, to put an end to this reign of fear, and so a number of police dogs were called for.

Some clothes which had belonged to Garnier were given to the dogs, and detectives, in pairs, scoured all likely

places with these intelligent animals. Endless days passed, with constant false alarms. At last, after Monsieur Guichard had again settled into a state of permanent gloom, the news came that both men were in a house called the Villa du Moulin Rouge at Nogent-sur-Marne.

Shortly before dawn the house was surrounded, but it was found impossible to approach it. Holes had been made in the walls on all four sides, from which the inmates could fire. Logs and bushes had been placed to trip up anyone approaching, and the villa was so situated that it could not be attacked from the back, as there was a species of hillock protecting it. Orders were given that we should entrench ourselves.

The 5th battalion of the 1st Zouaves was telephoned for, and a number of Marines on leave also volunteered for duty. We had, of course, tried to take the inmates by surprise while it was still dark, but several dogs belonging to the bandits had given the alarm.

Shortly after dawn the door of the house opened and a girl came out, shouting to us, "Don't shoot. I surrender." It was a friend of Garnier. She had looked after them at the villa and had cooked for them. She was at once taken away by two constables.

The girl was questioned as to who was in the house, but for a time refused to reply. At last she said defiantly :

"You will never get them. They have hundreds of bombs and dozens of pistols. It is because they have made up their minds to die that I asked Garnier to let me go, since I do not wish to be killed."

"I love him, but I would sooner see him shot than made a mock of by the police."

"Hundreds of you will be killed before you kill them,

for the whole inside of the house is protected with sacks of cement ! He will know how to die, *allez*, my Charles ! ”

The information received did not come as a surprise, for we fully expected that the two bandits had prepared their defences. Monsieur Guichard also had a surprise in store for the besieged.

This time he had provided metal shields for his men. Instead of wasting time firing at the windows, since we knew the men were not there, six police advanced under cover of these shields, carrying bombs. Brigadier Fleury was just remarking to his companion, “ Well, now, this is fine ; they cannot hurt us behind our dish-covers,” when a series of shots came from the house.

Fleury staggered and fell. His companion stooped, and received a wound in the arm. All the bullets passed through the metal shields as if they had been made of paper. There was nothing for it but to run, which they did. Fleury was not badly wounded, and managed to get away with the help of his friend.

Several of the Zouaves climbed on to the hillock and tried to bomb the villa, but unfortunately the distance was too great. A machine-gun, however, was got into action, and under cover of its fire we advanced near enough to draw Garnier and Villemain's fire whilst yet far enough away to be fairly safe. During this time some of the Zouaves had approached carrying mattresses, with metal shields tied in front. They managed to throw three dynamite cartridges, that took effect, but only blew off a corner of the house. It still stood firm, held by the sacks of cement.

It was then decided to resort to melinite, and a charge of this terrific explosive was placed near enough. This was effective, and the house collapsed ! Amid the ruins

we found Garnier and Villemin, both dead. Thus were the last of these desperate criminals still at liberty finally killed. The others were all at the prison of La Santé awaiting their trial, and Paris began to feel secure once more.

It was within a week of the trial of these twenty-two rogues and murderers that a most daring attempt was made to liberate them all from within the prison itself.

One of the men, named Eckerlen, was in a cell next to the room of the warder in charge of that section. A small glass pane let into the wall of the cell allowed the officer to glance in from his room from time to time to see that all was well. This cell was specially used, for that reason, for men who were known to be desperate characters.

One evening this warder, who had been off duty, came back and found his place in a state of disorder. His books were strewn about the room, his desk forced open, and one of his uniforms was missing. His first thought was that his colleagues were playing a practical joke on him, hoping to make him think that his room had been visited by thieves. The humour of the idea that thieves could break into the prison tickled him, and, chuckling to himself, he began to pick up his belongings. Happening to glance at the little window, however, he saw that the glass was broken and the frame torn out. He sprang up and looked in. The cell was empty!

Now greatly disturbed, he rushed out to give the alarm. He was just in time to see a warder, with his back to him, unlocking cell after cell on the lower level. These cells were those in which the Motor Bandits were confined. Wondering more and more, without realising

yet what it all might mean, he hurried towards the warder, meaning to tell him what had happened. The officer was a stranger. A doubt seized him. He ran along the gangway and pressed the alarm bell. Then, approaching the unknown warder, he called out, "Who are you, and what are you doing?"

"My duty, of course, as you should be!" was the calm reply. Still uncertain whether anything was really wrong, he went down the stairs and called his principal warder. The two of them went up to the strange officer, who had by now unlocked several more cells. The principal warder, who knew that no order had been given for this, seized a steel bar, used for testing doors, and aimed a blow at the man, who immediately drew his Service revolver and fired. The bullet went wide. At once he placed the revolver to his head and pulled the trigger, but his hand was knocked up in time. It was Eckerlen!

By now a dozen officers had rushed to the scene, and the prisoners were covered and ordered back to their cells, but it was a near thing!

The trial lasted a week. Dieudonné, Callemin La Science, Carouy, Soudy, and Siementoff were sentenced to death.

On their return to prison Carouy committed suicide by taking cyanide. A warder saw him place something in his mouth after he was put in his cell. He immediately rushed in and forced the teeth apart. The prisoner was chewing the finger of a glove. An emetic was forced down his throat, but too late. He died in a few minutes.

It was conjectured that the poison was passed to him in the dock when friends of the gang threw them oranges

and cigarettes—an extraordinary state of things which was tolerated in France until lately.

Dieudonné was reprieved for reasons I will not go into, and sent to prison for life.

On a cold winter's morning Deibler, the French executioner, beheaded the other three bandits, one after another.

All night the executioner and his helpers had been hard at work putting up the dreadful machine. It is customary in France not to inform the condemned man in advance of the hour of his death, so that he does not know until the fatal moment has arrived that the President of the Republic has refused to sign his reprieve.

For that reason, too, the hammers of the workmen are muffled, and as little noise as possible is made in putting up the scaffold.

This time, however, as I stood and watched the dread shape slowly growing in the gloom, I thought this humane precaution misplaced in dealing with such savage scoundrels. Others evidently thought so too, for as the machine grew under the busy hands of the workmen cries of "*A mort ! A mort !* Death to the apaches !" sounded on all sides. The mounted police did little to stop the clamour, which must have reached the trembling wretches inside the prison.

Never shall I forget the dawn of that morning.

As the light increased I saw before me a huge wooden erection. Three steps led up to the platform on which was the instrument of justice. Black against the sky I saw with a shudder two upright posts, ten feet high, at the top of which was a shining triangular blade. At the base was the horizontal board called *la bascule*,

which pivots on its centre, and lifts up, to allow the victim to be strapped against it in a standing position.

At the end of it, just underneath the knife, is the *lunette*—a board with a hole in the centre, of which the top half slides up between the posts.

At half-past five the work was finished, and Deibler inspected every part by the light of a lantern. Then a cloth dummy was fetched and placed on to the board. Down went the *bascule*, and with a thud the keen blade, weighted with lead, sheared through the neck. Seven times did the executioner test his tool.

.

Six o'clock, and Deibler and his men enter the condemned cell.

The *procurcur* had no need to wake the three men doomed to die ; the yells of the crowd had done that.

The age-old formula was pronounced :

" *Ayez du courage* (Be courageous) ! Your reprieve has been refused."

Quickly each man was seized, his arms strapped behind him, and with a pair of shears his hair and clothes were cut away from his neck. It is pitiful how, at the last, each man tries to steal a few minutes from eternity by begging for a cigarette, and then requesting to be confessed by the pallid, trembling priest.

Outside the crowd is becoming impatient, and shouts of " Death, death ! " penetrate to the cells.

" *Ah, les vaches*," Callemin muttered, " I should like to see them in my place."

Now the last rite is finished !

The priest was unable to accompany the doomed men ; he had fainted !

Because of his dreadful crimes, Callemin was to die

last, and was made to stand where he could hear the swish and thud of the knife.

Fifty steps and they were within sight of the guillotine. As his eyes fell on the sinister machine, Siementoff gave a groan of terror and drew back instinctively. Ten seconds—the *bascule* had dropped, and the knife had avenged all those peaceful workers whom this brute had killed.

A second rush—a thud; and Soudy had paid his debt!

Callemin did not wait to be seized!

Calmly and methodically he placed himself against the blood-soaked board, and his last words were, “*Faites vite ; je faiblis !*” (“Be quick ; I weaken.”)

So died the worst criminals that gay, frivolous Paris had ever begotten.

LACOMBE OF THE SPIKED SUIT

CHAPTER VIII

LACOMBE OF THE SPIKED SUIT

IT comes to me that in all my reminiscences I have shown man to be an ugly, mean, selfish, and cruel animal.

It is true that so many of my stories deal with those who, through environment, heredity, or circumstances, became the enemies of their species. Some might even have been true men had they been given the opportunity. Perhaps none of them were quite bad.

The best protection of principles is prosperity. It requires a strong character to stand up for principles in the face of great temptation or when things go wrong. There is one type of *homo sapiens*, however, who is *all* bad, who has no redeeming quality, and that is the sentimental criminal.

The mere brute who commits a crime because he has the unrestrained passion and covetousness of the savage does so because the crime is a necessary means to an end, but he would much prefer it if that end could be gained otherwise.

It is the maudlin, sentimental scoundrel, full of self-pity and hypocrisy, who really enjoys inflicting pain and inspiring terror, and who is generally a coward to boot.

Such a man was Lacombe ! The worst of that species whom the French have named apaches, because their cold-blooded cruelty and ferocity made them appear akin to savages.

He first appeared on the scene at the time that the

motor bandits, with Bonnot and Raymond La Science at their head, had terrorised all France.

Although he also belonged to the anarchists, he preferred to work alone, unwilling to share either plunder or pleasure.

Single-handed he invaded a railway-station and killed the stationmaster. Again alone, he terrorised Ducret, my draughtsman, and his wife, a whole night, finally shooting them.

At the end, his suicide in the prison yard, in order to escape the guillotine, while warders pleaded with him and spread mattresses to break his fall, was both pitiful and grotesque.

.

After the execution of the Bonnot motor bandits, thinking that this salutary example would have the desired effect and that we should no longer be troubled with outbreaks of rabid anarchy, I called on Ducret, who had formerly been my draughtsman. He it was who had given us a useful hint at the time we were hunting the aggressors of the bank-messenger. I knew that he must have dealings with the underworld, as he edited the paper called *L'Idée Libre*, the trade paper, so to speak, of the anarchists. Ducret was a Swiss, and had embraced anarchy in his own country, merely as an ideal and a theory. Accustomed as he was to the peaceful, law-abiding men of Switzerland, he accepted the post of editor and printer of the *Idée Libre* in Paris, little dreaming that anarchy there was only an excuse for crime of the worst kind.

He had confessed to me how much he feared the men whom he met when he took on that work, and that he much desired to get away from such acquaintances.

Believing him sincere, and to help him break with the fanatics from whose ranks the Bonnot gang had emerged, I offered to take him back in his former capacity.

He had been with me again only a few weeks when Bannister, of Pinkerton's Paris Agency, called on me and requested me to come along, with my special apparatus for photographing finger-prints, to a house where a murder had been committed. A perplexing case he said it was.

An American named Carnegie had been found murdered in the Rue Richelieu.

Carnegie was famous as an enthusiastic admirer of the past glories of France, and his collection of Sévres porcelain and relics of Louis the Fifteenth had been exhibited many times. Unfortunately Carnegie had also been an eccentric, disdaining safes and burglar-alarms, and this had, no doubt, led to his death. Robbery had obviously been the motive for the crime. The flat had been broken into the night before, while the owner was in bed asleep. His valuable collection of gold snuff-boxes had been taken, and he himself was found dead in bed, strangled.

So far there was nothing strange about the case, but, in the room where the snuff-boxes were kept, a young man had been found, sitting upright in a chair, stone dead, with a *lingue* (an apache's knife) in his heart. This young man was a stranger to the house, unknown to the janitor, and quite unidentified by the police. What he had been doing there no one could conjecture. In appearance he was a gentleman, and probably of British or American nationality—although he had no papers in his pockets—for the name of an English tailor was discovered on his clothes. We went to the house,

where, by Bannister's request, nothing had been touched. A strange sight met us when we entered.

Sitting bolt upright in a high-backed chair was a young man of some twenty years, quite dead. The doctor who examined him was of the opinion that his death must have taken place at the same time as that of Carnegie, the unfortunate owner of the flat.

I at once set to work. My method was then quite new. By means of special selective chemicals, I obtained clear photographs of the imprint of four fingers on the handle of the knife, also some very good ones on the edge of the glass cases from whence the snuff-boxes had been taken. These photographs were sent to the police laboratory.

In the meantime the Sûreté had discovered that a young man named Walters, hailing from New York, and who had been studying art in Paris, had been missing for some days from his lodging at the Rue Vavasseur, in the Latin Quarter.

Bannister and I went there with a special permit, and made some more photographs, by means of which we were able to prove that Walters and the dead man in the chair were one and the same.

What had caused him to go to the flat in the Rue Richelieu? Why had he gone there? Certainly not with any criminal intention, for his life, as far as it had been known to his friends and neighbours, had been a very quiet and harmless one. Art and psychology had been his only interests.

His family were living in the States and were believed to be wealthy, for the *concierge*, who in Paris always knows the financial position of all his tenants, was emphatic in his statement that the American had been

well provided with money. We at once communicated with New York, and the father cabled asking Pinkerton's to act in conjunction with the French police. Thus Bannister and I joined in the hunt for the murderer.

Thanks to my photographic records, the police identified the finger-prints taken in the flat where the two dead men were found as those of a man named Lacombe, a shoemaker, who had been sentenced to a term of imprisonment some years previously. There was no doubt that the same hand which had strangled Carnegie had also driven home the knife which killed Walters. The reason for the first crime was clear. Carnegie must have awakened, and Lacombe had killed him to prevent him from giving the alarm. But what had the young American been doing there? And why had Lacombe killed him?

Medical evidence proved that he had actually been sitting in the chair when he was stabbed. What the explanation of the mystery was, no one could imagine. A reward was immediately offered for information regarding Lacombe's whereabouts. All his known haunts were watched. It was discovered that he often went to visit a young woman noted for her beautiful hair. Her nickname, in fact, was "*Casque d'Or*," or "Golden Helmet." She kept a small café in a narrow street near one of the old gates of the metropolis, the St. Denis Gate.

For a week our search was without result, although the French police had men watching all the dens frequented by the anarchists. Then, one morning, Bannister called me up on the telephone and told me that he thought Lacombe was in the café kept by his sweetheart.

As neither he nor I had ever seen the apache, I tried to ir luce Ducret, who admitted that he knew him to

accompany me, but he appeared so terrified at the suggestion that I did not insist. He described him minutely, however, and added that a small heart was tattooed on the back of his right hand.

Accompanied by several detectives, we went back to the café. Without a doubt the man we sought was sitting at the bar, calmly sipping coffee. The men of the Sûreté decided to wait until he left, since a struggle in such a small place might end badly for one or all of us.

Lacombe evidently noticed us peering through the doorway, for shortly afterwards he came swaggering out. Two detectives immediately seized him by the arms. Lacombe merely laughed, and gave his arms a twist. The result was startling. With a yell, both detectives let go. Their hands were covered with blood. Several police who had been called to help also tried to hold him, but it was impossible. There stood Lacombe laughing loudly, and shouting that no one could take him. With devilish ingenuity he had made himself a complete suit of leather, studded from top to bottom with two-inch-long, steel spikes, fastened on the inside, points outwards.

Valiantly a half-dozen police again threw themselves upon him, but their pluck was in vain. His twists and struggles tore their hands and clothes to shreds. In a moment he was free, and, before anything could be done, he sprang on to a passing taxi, evidently a confederate's, and was gone.

I stood dumbfounded. This was indeed a clever trick. I had never before seen anything like it. Of course he could have been shot, but we had received no instructions to this effect, and, without killing or wounding him, we were helpless. His spiked suit had

been hidden by a long cape, and everyone had been taken completely by surprise. Those who had tried to seize him were terribly lacerated.

For several days we again searched aimlessly. Then came the news that a small suburban railway-station had been broken into and robbed. One of the porters said that the stationmaster had grappled with the intruder, only to have hands and face torn by dreadful spikes. The robber, who had been masked, had then shot him dead, out of sheer wanton cruelty, and had set fire to the house in which were the stationmaster's wife and children, after saturating the floor with petrol.

The murdered man's wife was burned to death, and the two children were only got out of the building with difficulty. The spiked suit, and the finger-prints which I obtained, proved this dreadful crime to have been again perpetrated single-handed by Lacombe. Once more he had disappeared.

But the bandit's ferocity so terrorised the public, and even his friends, that we hoped to get information which would lead us to him.

Shortly after the railway-station outrage, his sweetheart, "Casque d'Or," came to headquarters and told us that she was in constant fear of Lacombe. She added that he was coming to see her that evening at her home. He would come by train, she said, at about seven, and get out at the little suburban station of Bezons. Bannister and I, with half a dozen gendarmes, went to this station in good time, so as to be ready for any eventuality. We were armed, but as yet we had no orders to use our weapons if we could not take him alive.

With beating heart, I watched the train come to a stop. True enough, Lacombe himself got out—there

were only a few passengers besides. He must have expected trouble, for, as soon as he got out, he shouted :

“ Don’t come near me ; I have a bomb in each hand and two more in my pockets. At the first step you take I’ll throw them and blow you and myself to pieces.”

There was no mistaking his murderous intention. In each hand he held a round, black object ; and we could see his pockets bulging with other weapons. No one moved ; we were paralysed. Backing towards the exit, this man, who had practically cowed us, swiftly turned and ran down the incline. With one accord we rushed after him. But as we got to the gate there was a terrific explosion, and we were all hurled to the ground.

From a distance Lacombe had thrown one of his bombs.

We saw that if he was to be taken it could only be by a ruse, unless we were prepared for appalling loss of life. Bannister and I got into a car and drove to the local police-station, and telephoned to the chief of the Sûreté, Monsieur Guichard. Men were at once posted on all the roads, and it was hoped that Lacombe might be taken unawares. Monsieur Lepine, the Chief of Police, who had been informed of the state of affairs, gave orders that we were to shoot on sight. It was useless to hope that he could be taken alive.

Bannister and I were about to return to Paris when a thought came to me. What about the girl ? Lacombe would guess that she had given the information which had brought us to the station. I said as much to my companion.

“ We can’t leave her to his mercy,” I added. Bannister nodded, and turned the car at full speed towards the road leading to her lodging. We were quickly there.

It was a small, single-storied house of the type common to the Paris suburbs. None of the police, who should have been watching, appeared. A light was shining from a window on the first floor, and all was quiet, but the front door was wide open. Pistol in hand, we rushed upstairs, expecting to be met by bullets or a bomb: To our surprise the room was empty. I was about to open the door leading into another room when Bannister seized me by the arm and pointed to the floor. Creeping slowly and thickly across it from under the door was a red stream. Horror-stricken, we looked at each other, for we knew what we should find—we had come too late. A minute passed before we could overcome the dread that held our nerves in an icy grip, making our flesh creep. Then I made up my mind. "He may be in there yet," I said, "and there may be a window. I'll wait here alone, while you run round outside and watch that he does not get out. Come, if I fire."

Bannister nodded, and a moment later I pushed open the door. It was a horrible sight that I looked down upon. The poor creature we knew as "Casque d'Or" was lying huddled on the floor, her throat cut from ear to ear, and her beautiful hair soaked with her blood, stone dead! On her breast was pinned a paper with the words, "So die all traitors. *Vive l'Anarchie!* Lacombe."

We searched the house, but the fiend who had done this cowardly thing was not there. From that moment all trace of him again seemed lost, although the whole countryside was anxious to help.

Weeks passed, and Monsieur Guichard became more and more irritable at the comments in the daily papers.

One morning, shortly after dawn, I was awakened by a loud ringing of the telephone. "Come at once," I heard

over the wire. "Bannister speaking. Your man, Ducret, has been shot by Lacombe. I shall be at the house of the murdered man."

Hardly waiting to dress, I rushed down there. In the little room where I had the interview with Ducret, when looking for the Bonnot gang, I found Ducret's wife sitting on a stool, sobbing hysterically, while two ambulance surgeons were dressing a wound on her skull where a bullet had grazed her. Poor Ducret, less fortunate, was lying in bed dead! Three bullets had taken effect. After his wife had regained a measure of composure we got the story of the night's happenings from her.

Among anarchists it is the custom to sleep with the door unlocked, so that anyone of the brotherhood may find ready sanctuary there if he should need it. At about one in the morning Ducret had come to bed, where his wife was already asleep, and was about to blow out the lamp standing on a table near by when there was a stumble in the passage, and Lacombe entered the room. For a moment he stood in the doorway, enjoying the evident terror he inspired, and then, with a leer, he advanced towards the bed.

"So, you police spy," he said to Ducret, "I find you at home, eh? Well, say your prayers now, for you and your simpering wife are going to die. Don't move, either of you. We'll have a little talk first, but if you try to move or call out I'll shoot." At the words he pulled two automatics from his pocket.

Madame Ducret assured Lacombe that they had not betrayed him, and pointed to the open door as a proof of an easy conscience.

Then began a night of torture. Lacombe was evidently

not quite ready to kill yet—he needed some justification, some proof, in order to work himself up to the pitch of murder. Feverishly he searched all the furniture for letters, keeping his eyes constantly on the trembling couple in bed. Finding nothing, he came back to his victims and began to question them. He was not a murderer, he said—merely an instrument of justice. The stationmaster had tried to have him arrested when he asked for some food. He had never done anything wrong. “Casque d’Or,” too, had betrayed him. He had loved her. Tears came to his eyes when he told them this, Madame Ducret said.

“The brute, oh, the brute! He wanted to kill us; I could see it well enough, but he knew that we had done him no harm. For a whole hour he questioned my poor husband, trying to make him admit that he was a police spy.”

Then Lacombe hunted up some bottles of wine and sat there drinking, and singing ribald songs, for several hours, keeping his two victims terrorised by the menace of his pistols.

Finally, about five in the morning, the bottles being then empty, the monster got unsteadily to his feet, and said, “Time now to be acting. What about your epitaph? Come, you must help me to compose that.” Taking paper and pencil from his pocket, he began to rhyme, jeering at the trembling Ducret, and reading out his choice verse as he wrote.

Maddened and despairing, Ducret seized a moment when Lacombe was stooping over the paper, and tried to knock over the lamp. At that Lacombe raised the pistols that were dangling from his wrists by straps and fired four shots. The explosions put out the paraffin lamp,

and in the dark the last thing Madame Ducret heard before she fainted were her husband's dying groans and Lacombe's laugh as he ran out, slamming the door.

I ordered Madame Ducret to be removed to hospital, and then, turning to Bannister, I said, "Come along, I have an idea ; we'll let the police do as they like. We'll take Lacombe ourselves."

At home I had some very fine mediæval chain mail, complete with gauntlets. I suggested that we should put the mail shirts on under our clothes and put on gloves over the steel gauntlets. Thus protected, we should be able to cope with the spiked monster, and resist knife-thrusts besides.

On the second night we ran him down in a low haunt. As we came in, we heard him bragging that he was invulnerable. Wasting no time, we walked straight up to him. We were determined to take this brute unhurt. The guillotine alone should kill him.

Lacombe watched us advance, smilingly, evidently enjoying in anticipation our surprise and dismay when we should feel his spikes. That, I imagine, is why he drew no weapons. Then began a terrible fight ; he tried his best to lacerate us, jerking his body to and fro. One of his arms caught Bannister on the neck and made a long gash up to his chin. He bears the scar yet, but otherwise the good old armour protected us against the modern steel. Finally we managed to throw him down, and the handcuffs clicked on his wrists.

Holding off Lacombe's friends, now crowding round, with our pistols, we got him out into the street.

A car quickly drove us to headquarters, where surprise at our capture held all the regular police speechless. Here the French regulation handcuffs were added to

ours, and he was undressed. His famous suit is now an exhibit in the police museum. I obtained a photograph of him sitting between two policemen, a blanket thrown over his legs. Deprived of his spikes, he became quite tractable, and enjoyed the evident curiosity with which we all examined this monster.

He admitted all his crimes, and boasted of many others we knew nothing about. I requested permission to question him about Walters, for I was curious about that. Lacombe laughed when I asked him. "*Ah, l'Américain ; oui, oui*, that puzzled you, eh? Well, it was this way. That mad one—for all English and Americans are mad, are they not?—he wished to study the ways of the apache. I met him, and he promised me money if I would take him with me and show him how we broke into a place. I was not to take anything that time, but merely give him a little thrill.

"Well, *sacré nom*, that suited me. I had noted *le vieux* Carnegie's snuff-boxes. I used to mend his shoes when I was working as a shoemaker, before the dirty police accused me falsely and made me become a criminal. One night I took the little artist to the Rue Richelieu. When we got inside he became frightened, so I told him to sit in the chair while I looked at the place. He must have heard the old *singe* yell when I garotted him, for when I came to get the snuff-boxes the fool was sitting back in a faint. I thought what a joke it would be on the police if I left him there, so I pushed my little knife between his ribs. I laughed all the way home, thinking of the wise theories the *sacré* police would make about him."

Lacombe was then taken to the Dépôt, as it is called. Here he wrote his memoirs and long letters to his friends,

telling them what a shame it was that he had not been allowed to remain honest, that his desire had always been to become a good citizen, but that Fate had betrayed him.

His trial lasted a week, and in court Lacombe was in tears most of the time, bemoaning his fate and accusing the police of conspiring against him. He was sentenced to be guillotined.

Two weeks before the date fixed for the execution, while exercising in the prison yard, Lacombe managed to evade his guards, and climbed up on to the roof of a prison building. He threatened to throw himself off at once if anyone tried to climb up.

From his post he made a long, sentimental speech. He was only a poor, wronged orphan, who had had no one to guide him. Well, it was over. When the clock chimed twelve he would dash himself down on to the stone yard and end it all. The warders argued with him in vain, the while the prison authorities spread mattresses all over the courtyard to break the brute's fall. At last 12 a.m. struck, and, with a grandiloquent gesture, Lacombe jumped, while his counsel, who had been called, shudderingly averted his eyes. Avoiding the mattresses, Lacombe crashed to the stone flags and was instantly killed. So perished one of the worst criminals I have ever met. One who killed merely "for the fun of it."

NURSE EDITH CAVELL AND THE WAR

CHAPTER IX

NURSE EDITH CAVELL AND THE WAR

DURING the year 1914 I had been following with great interest the case of Madame Caillaux, wife of the French Minister of Finance, who, it will be remembered, shot and killed the editor of the *Figaro*, Monsieur Calmette, because he had threatened to publish letters written by her to Monsieur Caillaux.

I had been asked by a well-known British barrister to interpret for him the phases of this extraordinary trial, which ended in her acquittal.

I had then gone to Pola, in Bosnia, on a mission. This took me to Sarajevo in July, only a few days before the terrible assassination that brought about the world war.

I well remember the gaily decorated streets, and the crowds thronging them, eager to see the Archduke. No one imagined that it would be a day of horror.

Of course, it is easy to be wise after an event, but, looking back on the sequence of happenings, I cannot conceive how it was that I did not link up the facts and foresee what was in store for civilisation. All that I thought, as I stood at the corner from which the murderous shots had been fired by Princip and his companions, was that a dastardly plot had brought its own reward. Austria had wanted an excuse, I was given to understand, for declaring war on Serbia. It was arranged that, during the Archduke's visit to Saraj' vo, bombs purporting to have been thrown by

Serbian were to explode harmlessly near the carriage.

According to my informant, the Duke was aware of this, and for that reason drove slowly through the streets, awaiting the prearranged attack. Instead of the toy bombs, a fusillade of revolver shots burst forth unexpectedly, and he and the woman by his side were killed.

How far this counterplot was pre-arranged I am not going to say. We will let sleeping dogs lie ; but one thing I know as a fact, and that is that, when the news of the murder was brought in hot haste by a servant to the Prince Louis Windisch Graetz, one of the powerful Austrian Princes, who was dining at his country seat, he started up, pallid and shaking, and exclaimed : " What ! Killed ! Then it is war ! It is the beginning ! "

He evidently knew what was going to happen.

.

Although, whilst travelling back from the scene of the tragedy through France, intending to stay a while at Aix-les-Bains, I saw many scare headlines and heard much talk of war, neither I nor anyone else believed it would be anything but another Balkan crisis—involving Austria and Serbia, and possibly some of the Slavonic kingdoms. So little did I believe it that I had arranged to take my father and mother to Triberg in the Black Forest to spend August.

So it came about that on the first of August I took the night train to Basle, having arranged to meet my sister Margaret in Offenburg. She was coming from London, and it was our intention to go to the Black Forest to find a house for the remainder of the summer.

I arrived at Basle in the early morning. At that time this town was the frontier station between Germany

and Switzerland. One half of the big station itself was held by the German Customs, so that when you had passed them you were virtually in Germany. I remember vividly the stolid German officials standing where now the French hold sway.

All looked very peaceful and normal. I shrugged my shoulders at the thought of the rumours of war I had heard, and stepped on to German soil. I did not think then that from that moment I had left happiness and peace behind me for many weary months to come.

I arrived at Offenburg at 8.30, and went to a hotel opposite the station, as I had not to meet my sister until ten. There were a good many officers and soldiers about, but that was nothing unusual for Germany. There always were.

At ten I had my first shock. When I returned to the station to meet my sister I was told there would be no train from Paris that day.

I went at once to the telegraph office and sent a wire, which, as I later discovered, never arrived. Feeling very anxious and worried, I then turned back to the hotel. I requested the porter to let me know at once if any train *did* arrive from Paris, and, unable to do anything further for the moment, went to bed, tired out with travelling.

Then came the second shock, heralded by a sudden shouting and yelling in the streets and the blare of a bugle. Running to the window, I saw for the first time the dirty grey uniform that was soon to become so familiar. A soldier on a motor-cycle was affixing white sheets of paper to a wall opposite, an excited, yelling crowd surging round to read it as soon as he left. I dressed and went down to see what it was.

"*Kriegszustand*," was the word that jumped at me—"State of Siege Declared." Then followed detailed instructions to citizens.

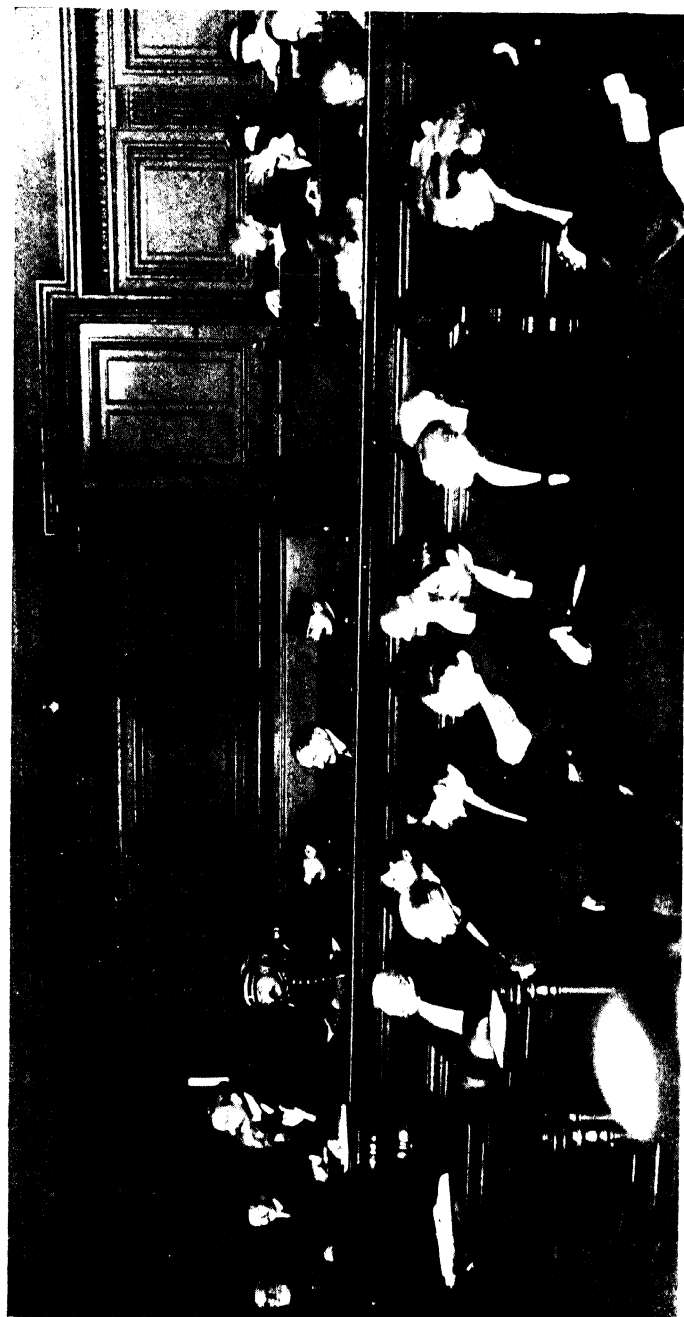
My fatigue disappeared. This was beginning to look serious. I inquired at the station opposite. Still no trains! I saw that it was high time for me to get out of Germany, if it was going to be war. My place was in England, although I did not then imagine that we could ever be mixed up in this trouble. I telegraphed again telling my sister not to come, and then left the hotel.

I thought the best thing was to search for a garage, since there were no trains. Coming round the corner of a side street I saw a sight that astonished and alarmed me more than the proclamation. Before me was a little church, and outside, filling the street, hundreds of men and women, unable to get inside, were kneeling on the ground praying. I waited till the prayer was finished and the people in the church had started a hymn; then, seeing one of the men rise and walk away, I asked him what the news was. "News!" he said. "Why, Russia is invading our Eastern Provinces. The Cossacks are murdering our women. It is war! war!"

I was certain that this was all nonsense, and told him so, but only got an angry word in reply.

For an hour I went from garage to garage. Not a single car was to be had anywhere. All had been requisitioned by the military, not even a cycle could be hired or bought. Back I trudged once more to the hotel, at which it seemed to me that I was doomed to remain.

Late that evening the porter said that there might be a train going back to Basle at some time during the night; so I had my luggage taken over to the station, and settled down to wait on the platform. Never shall




SCENE AT THE PARIS ASSIZES.
An accomplice, accused of dealings with the Germans, defending himself. Another is seen sitting
between two gendarmes. The counsels do not wear wigs.

A few reminiscences.
 in the 14th century. 1879

Non che l'ossessione è una *hysteria*.

J'ai reçu votre bonne lettre
 du 10 Oct. Elle m'affranchit un peu
 de l'écueil de l'insouciance que vous
 avez fait voir à M. de M...
 au milieu d'une telle je ne sache
 pas la loi d'oublier, pour s'occuper
 de la sienne, que le monde a fait car
 votre sang, par la traduction de l'œuvre
 de l'œuvre, l'œuvre de l'œuvre
 d'œuvre que l'œuvre
 dans le monde
 que par la œuvre
 dit au par la œuvre
 que l'œuvre



JEAN PIERRE VAQUIER.

The Frenchman who was hanged for the murder of Alfred Poynter Jones, landlord of the Blue Anchor Inn at Byfleet. The letter was written to Mr. Ashton Wolfe from the condemned cell at Wandsworth, and contains the following passage: "*Believe me, I heard the emotion of your voice whilst marshalling the dreadful sentence to me.*"

I forget those hours. As I sat, train after train came through towards the Swiss border, crammed full with a howling, yelling, drunken mob. Train after train!

Every ten minutes or so one passed, filled with men going to join their units. They were not in uniform yet, and drunken every one.

God help France I thought, for these men were not going to Russia, that was very clear. Their boastful yells of what they would do when they got to Paris told me what was afoot. I sat there rigid, in the clutches of a nightmare. At last, towards morning, a train stopped that would take passengers and was going to Basle, or so the stationmaster thought. But it went only as far as Leopoldshöhe; and there I saw that the rails were torn up and communication with Switzerland interrupted.

There was nothing to be done, so I got out and walked wearily through the village. In front of me was a bridge spanning the Rhine, and on the other side Switzerland and safety.

All around me already were men in field-grey, busy hauling guns and entrenching.

I quickly made up my mind. I would try to cross the bridge somehow. Seeing a garage, I walked in. As in Offenburg, all the vehicles had been requisitioned, but, as luck would have it, there was one car, a powerful racer, which had just come in with a burst tyre. I managed to persuade the owner to try and get across the bridge into Basle, offering him 600 francs (£25) if he would do it. I explained that I merely wanted to get back to my family. After some argument he consented to risk it.

While we were waiting for a fresh tyre to be put on a
Hw

man and woman entered the place, and, seeing the car, offered to pay another £25 if they could also go along. I felt sure from their accent that they were Russians, but said nothing. Seeing that I made no objection, and delighted, no doubt, at the double fee, the driver told them to get in beside me, and we started.

At the beginning of the main road leading over the bridge was a hill, and this we first climbed. Then the chauffeur set the car straight at the bridge. Our speed was terrific. In a few moments we were approaching the river, and I imagined that nothing could stop us. Suddenly there came a volley of shots, a banging of bursting tyres, a grinding crash, and the car smashed into a hidden trench, completely overturning!

We were at once surrounded by soldiers, and hauled out, with scant attention to our hurts, which, luckily, were not great. Then, between fixed bayonets, we were all marched off.

I, of course, protested energetically to the officer before whom we were brought, and waved my British passport in his face.

"*Ach! Engländer!*" he said, rather taken aback. "Well, what do you mean by trying to rush the bridge. Did you not read the notices?"

"Notices? No," I replied. "I have only just arrived, and I want to get to Switzerland."

"Just so," he grinned. "You are not the only one who'll be wanting to get out of Germany, but you can't, and if you were not British I would have you imprisoned. As it is—well, you are free to go anywhere into Germany, but not out of it. You have already seen too much. How you ever got here I cannot conceive.

"Now who are these people?" pointing to the two

Russians. The woman was bleeding from a cut in the forehead, and her long black hair was hanging around her like a mantle. I explained that they had asked to be allowed to come on the car as passengers, but that I did not know them.

"Passports," the officer snapped at them.

"We have none," the man replied. "Until now there has never been any necessity for a passport."

"Well, papers, letters, documents of some kind. I suppose you have some?" the German said impatiently. "What nationality are you, anyway?"

"Russian," the woman said defiantly. "Russian citizens, travelling for pleasure and doing no harm."

"Ach! so, I thought so! And your cossacks are invading our frontiers. Well, I have no instructions as yet; but I'll tell you this: I give you twenty minutes to disappear. If, after that, I see you anywhere about, you will be imprisoned. Now go. And you, the *Englander* who travels with our enemies and tries to force a way out, you also had better go quickly, before I change my mind. We want no trouble with your meddlesome England, but—go quickly!"

I saw that the man was in a furious temper. Evidently Russia was going to be the *casus belli*. As in 1870 the powers in Berlin had lied to their men in order to make them believe that they were defending their homesteads.

So—bruised and disheartened—I limped to the station and obtained a seat in a train going back to Offenburg. From there I travelled along the Rhine as far as Mannheim, where I expected to find a British Consulate. Hailing a taxi at the railway-station, I drove slowly through excited crowds in search of it. It was closed; and the Consul, who was a German, had left.

Back we drove again to the station, through the jeering and sometimes threatening throng. As we stopped in front of it the driver shouted something to them, and at once sticks were lifted and stones thrown.

"Down with the *Englanders*," I heard on all sides.

I spent the night at Mannheim. Early in the morning I was awakened by a tremendous uproar in the streets.

"Japan has declared war against Russia," was the news posted on all the walls. "Special telegram from the Eastern front. Russia invaded by the Japs. Petersburg in danger!" etc.

Every hour telegrams of this description were being published. Everyone was kept in a fever-heat, and it was quite natural that the men went singing and laughing to their recruiting-stations. They were not given time to think calmly and coolly. They were mad, mad!—as the rest of the world was soon to be too.

From Mannheim I travelled to Coblenz. I had seen men pass the barriers and obtain seats in the overcrowded trains by the magic word "*Dienst*" (Service of the State), so I also said "*Dienst*," and passed.

After hours of crawling trains we got to Welkenraad, the Belgian frontier. The excited, boasting speeches on the trains had strained my patience to the limit. To hear all these soldiers, they were already masters of the world and dividing its wealth. The loathing and horror on my face would surely have given me away if everyone had not been so crazed with war lust and drink.

At Welkenraad I joined a party of Belgians and Americans, who aided me in getting past the leering, swaggering sentry. Here I saw some artillery, but only field-guns. I caught no sight of anything like heavy artillery. They had been well hidden. One little thing

has stuck in my memory. Long before reaching Brussels I was parched with thirst. There was no water on the train. Everything was chaos. My thirst was torture. Finally, spying a thermos flask on the rack above a fellow-passenger, I asked if it contained anything.

"Nothing but water," was the reply. "You're welcome to that." Whereupon I forthwith forgot the war and the world in a long, satisfying draught. I emptied that flask!

My arrival at Brussels was a study in contrasts.

It was Sunday evening. For the last three days I had been living in an atmosphere of seething excitement. Preparations for war, for wholesale slaughter, were going on day and night only a few miles away—guns, aeroplanes, and weapons of terrific power were already on their way towards Liège; men were massing in their millions, ready to bring death and torture to their fellow humans—and yet here in Brussels people were promenading the streets dressed in their Sunday finery. The bourgeois, with his wife and children, sat at the terrace of the gaudy cafés sipping his beer or his coffee; bands were playing, and laughter resounded from the crowded restaurants. Did no one know, had no one told them, that in a few hours these same streets would be running in blood; that their youth and men, all unprepared, would be targets for murderous shells; their women homeless and starving, and their homes taken possession of by the swaggering Prussian?

For a minute a strange feeling that I had dreamed it all came over me.

I stopped a policeman, and, pointing to the north, said to him, "Do you know what is preparing over there? Wa ! War !"

"Nonsense, monsieur," he replied, smiling. "We are guaranteed by a treaty; besides, our forts at Liège will stop them; never fear!"

I saw how useless it was to argue. Hiring a taxi, I drove to the British Embassy, where I interviewed a fair young under-secretary.

He laughed when I told him what I had seen. "They will never dare to invade Belgium," he said. "And don't you try to start a panic. That is the last thing we want. Come along to-morrow and see Colonel Fairholme. You are overwrought, go to bed and sleep on it. Believe me, we are not likely to be involved."

Dazed and doubting, I went to my friend's house, where I was in the habit of staying, and tumbled into bed.

The next morning the bombshell had burst! Verviers was already in the hands of the enemy!

I immediately went to the Embassy and asked if I could be of any use. The world war had begun!

Of the war, and what happened, I do not need to tell everyone knows it too well. I will simply relate what I saw, in the midst of the enemy, expecting death at any moment, not in the heat of fighting, with the din of battle around me, but in the grey dawn, alone against a wall, before a firing party.

Naturally, with my knowledge of languages and my intimate knowledge of the country, I felt sure that I could be of great use in the secret service, much more than as a simple soldier.

At the Embassy I met a Captain Cuff, of the British Intelligence. I was requested to go, together with a young English teacher who had been living in Brussels, to buy up all the revolvers and automatics of large calibre. We were given an order and money. So in a

taxi we drove from gunsmith to gunsmith, buying Colts 45, Brownings, and Mausers, until the taxi-seats were heaped high with weapons. When we got back to the Embassy I was asked if I had any khaki-coloured clothes. I had not ; but I bought some, together with a Belgian soldier's cap complete with tassel. I was then given two arm-bands, with the Union Jack on them and stamped "British Embassy," and, thus dressed, and armed with one of the automatics I had bought, I was sent off on a powerful Triumph motor-cycle to Antwerp with dispatches.

How unused we were to war ! We had seen none of its horrors yet, and thought it a great game. The awakening came quickly ! Returning from Antwerp, where British Marines were now arriving, I saw a German Taube aeroplane flying low down over the outskirts of Laeken. The Brussels civic guard was called out and began firing at it. Peashooters against cannon !

With a vicious turn the plane backed, banking dangerously. As it swept over the street from where the civic guard were firing, a round object came hurtling down, and exploded with an awful crash in their midst. Carnage and slaughter ! Not one of the men was left alive.

I myself had a bad smash-up, and when I reported at Brussels I was told to go to one of the hospitals. After treatment there, I asked for and obtained permission to go to the home of my friend, who would look after me.

I had a few bad days, during which I was unable to move, and during this time a Belgian official called and told me that the Embassy staff had already left, that all retreat was cut off, and that the Germans were

advancing rapidly on Brussels. All guns were to be hidden. Brussels was going to surrender, since it was not fortified. He advised me to hide my badges, and told me that, if I wished, I could be of great service to my countrymen and others by staying in Brussels as a civilian, and, with my knowledge of French, Flemish and German, I should probably be able to gain information that would be of immense value. I consented willingly, and as soon as I could stand I went to Madame Baudart and got my instructions. The next afternoon the first of the Germans entered the town.

It was a sight which I shall always remember.

I was advised that the German troops would come down the Boulevard Botanique, so I went there and waited. Soon I heard a muttering chant, and then several motor-cars, escorted by Uhlans, came dashing along, sounding the peculiar signal that they had chosen—a motor-horn with four musical notes, which until then, in Berlin had been the signal that heralded the passing of the Kaiser. Now it was used by all the cars of the German Army. After the cars, in which were staff officers, came the first of the men.

On foot, on horseback, and on transport-waggon. Then guns, and ever more guns!

Now and again some of the mounted officers broke from the ranks and rode into the town, taking possession of public buildings.

Eight days they passed, in an endless, swinging tide, singing as they went. Within an hour of the arrival of the first all the principal buildings were occupied. They swarmed everywhere, and the reign of terror had commenced. The first intimation we had of what was in store for us were the proclamations that were posted

everywhere. Rules, regulations, and threats, the least of which was instant death.

I saw that I should have to go warily. Spies and informers were all about us. I felt very helpless. What could I possibly do? I was soon to find out, however. I was at once asked to go to a house where some plucky women, who had undertaken to help those French, English, Belgian, and Russian men who had been caught like myself by the rapid advance of the Germans, had made their headquarters.

There were many British and French, from Malines, Liège, and Louvain, who had managed to hide, and who all wished to carry arms for the Allies. The first step was to obtain a travelling-permit for myself. Not an easy thing. I had to go to the Dutch passport headquarters, and by some means or other obtain a permit to go to Antwerp.

The Dutch Consul was not at all friendly.

When I asked him to give me a Dutch passport he informed me that, unless I left the Consulate at once, he would call in the Germans and have me arrested.

Finally, through the help of a friend, also a Dutchman, but not pro-German, I was given papers which stated that I was a Hollander trading with mussels on a canal barge. I soon saw, however, that I should never be able to play the part successfully, and so obtained a permit from a *bona fide* Flemish fisherman. The description did not tally, but it had to be risked.

I then had to go to certain houses where it was known that men were hiding, and to smuggle them one by one on to a canal barge that would take them part of the way to Antwerp, the first stage of the journey into Holland. I collected six of them altogether, and got them successfully

on board. Dressed in blue jerseys and dirty trousers, our feet shod with wooden shoes, we looked a picturesque crowd—much *too* picturesque, I thought.

At five o'clock on a cold, drizzly morning we started. Slowly we chugged our way through lock after lock. At each one was a German sentry, but, as no one showed on deck or got out, they did not interfere with us. We reached Bergessen at 2 p.m. in a terrible downpour, and I was never so grateful for rain in my life. I knew that I had to show my papers to the German officer there, and I took care that by the time he looked at them they were so wet that the description, which was, of course, written in ink, was illegible. That night I got my men on shore, and the next morning, by devious methods, I had them safely housed in Antwerp. From there we were to take a narrow-gauge steam-tram that went to Bergen-op-Zoom, on Dutch territory.

In Antwerp I obtained the necessary Dutch papers for my charges, these having been in readiness for us. My duty was simply to go along and do the talking, for, unfortunately, of my six Dutchmen, two spoke with a broad Lancashire accent, one was from Lambeth, and the others only spoke French. The tram was full of Dutch peasants, who were then still allowed to travel back and forth. The Germans were not the only danger, either. For the Dutch frontier guards caught and interned all escaping soldiers, or those likely to become soldiers.

I managed to get them safely across the border, however, and that night slept safely in Holland. Then I returned once more to Brussels. Before leaving Belgium, the secretary of the Italian Consulate, Signor Dezutti, had told me that I had better try and pass for an Italian, **since my Italian was perfect, whereas my Dutch was not ;**

and he had recommended me to a colleague in Flushing who would give me a passport.

Italy was, of course, still neutral at that time ; and few people know how much the Italian authorities did, unofficially, before they became our allies.

So I became a Neapolitan ; and my name was changed to Mario Salvatore Morelli. The mere sound of that lovely name I hoped would charm the sentries.

I returned with a hired conveyance as far as Putt. What a soul-shaking contrast that little village presented ! Across the main and, in fact, the only street a barrier had been raised. Half of the road was in Holland, the other in Belgium. On the farther side of the barrier were the hated grey uniforms, mostly elderly men of the *Landsturm*.

On the Dutch side there was plenty of food, laughter, work, the telephone, and the telegraph.

On the other side nothing but gaunt starvation, misery, and death. I'll admit I hesitated a moment before crossing the line.

However, it had to be done ! My passport was examined. Of course, I was now dressed as an ordinary business man. I was searched, questioned, and the lining of my clothes examined. Then, before I knew it, I was on my way back, rocking in a crazy old cab. A whole day I spent in that damp, foul vehicle before I got to Antwerp.

Here I found that the only means of going on that night was to share another cab with a man and two women, all strangers to each other, although obviously Belgians. It was an unpleasant journey, for we were all suspicious of each other. Late that night we were **sto ped** at one of the ruined, smashed forts of Antwerp,

the fort St. Katherine, and questioned. My Italian nationality gained me a friendly grunt, but the man with us was hauled out at once.

He had previously told me that he was a letter-carrier. That is, for a fee, he undertook to take a letter into Holland, generally from anxious parents without news of their sons at the front. He would wait until he had some hundreds of these letters, smuggle them through, post them, and then wait for the replies to be sent to him in Holland. These he would carry back into Belgium. Risky work and kindly work, although it was done for money. Well, this fellow carried all these letters in a second overcoat, whilst he was wearing one. He naïvely explained that he would deny all knowledge of the second coat if he were suspected.

As soon as he was hauled out I put on this letter-filled coat. It was his only chance, for, luckily, I had already been passed. It saved his life. When he was searched nothing was, of course, found on him, and he was allowed to go. So these letters, at any rate, arrived at their destinations, eagerly awaited for, I'll wager!

It was morning when I reported in Brussels. There, for the first time, I met a slim Englishwoman who was afterwards to become a martyr—Nurse Cavell! What a woman that was! A true Englishwoman! Outwardly cold and reserved, but inwardly a battery of nervous force and energy. Vibrating with patriotism, she counted her life and safety as nothing when the cause of the Allies and her own beloved England could be helped. For years she had devoted herself to the sick and helpless, hoping ever for a chance to justify the life and health God had given her. Now that chance had come; and proudly, quietly, and unobtrusively, in the teeth of

snarling brutal soldiery, she faced her task and gave her life so that others might live. The widow's mite indeed ; but it was such simple heroism that the book-learned psychology of the German professors had not reckoned with, and which led to their final downfall.

Nurse smiled when I told her of my adventures, and, I am proud to say, complimented me when I offered to go again on any other similar missions.

The canal was closed to us by now. It had been used too much ; we would have to find another way. There were at that time many Belgian families who had obtained permission to leave the country. No able-bodied man, of course, but women and old men, also children. Several enterprising agencies in Brussels undertook to transport them by charabanc, motor-car, or otherwise, and guaranteed them safe conduct into Holland. Of course, now, it seems obvious that these agencies must have been in the pay of the Germans, to be able to do that ; but at the time we believed that some, at least, managed to trick the Germans and were really anxious to help the "liberty group," which, with the aid of several well-known ladies of the best Belgian families, worked in secret under the leadership of Nurse Cavell.

A number of men were ready again, and I was sent to interview one of these transport companies. This one was in a small side street near the Gare du Nord. A Swiss was said to be managing it. I went there to arrange for a party of eight to be taken to Rosendaal. Some of the men, it was arranged, should be dressed as women, though I personally thought this very **hazardous**. Entering the little office, I saw to my **ast** **nishment** that the manager was a man whom I had

known before the war. No Swiss, but a German, if ever there was one. So that was the game! Well, two could play at it. I knew that he would not recognise me, altered in appearance, as I had taken care to be. We quickly came to terms; and it was decided that he should drive these old women and men himself.

After paying the sum which he demanded, I returned to our rendezvous and told the committee of my discovery. At first they were very dubious about carrying out the scheme which I outlined, but finally they agreed that, although it was risky, there was a chance of its succeeding, and, anyway, we had little choice.

The next morning we drove off, huddled up in an old, jolting waggon, although the horses were very fine, a suspicious fact in itself, in the light of our knowledge. I thought we should be safe until we reached Vilvoorde, where sentries stopped all vehicles. Some miles before we reached this place our friend the Swiss-German was suddenly seized from behind by one of the "old ladies" and knocked on the head. The necessary papers were taken from him, and I took his place. Instead of going via Capelles, where we guessed that we should find a squad waiting for us, we turned round and took a different road altogether. Once again we had successfully out-manœuvred the Boche. The next morning we arrived safely at Flushing.

I returned to Brussels very much elated, and reported that all was well. I thought it best, however, to rest for a while and allow my beard to grow. The soldiers occupying Brussels were constantly changing, and in a little while I should be able to continue fairly safely.

Life at this time was very strange. We were all living in the midst of constant excitement, and the strain was

beginning to tell. Of news we had little, although a Flemish peasant brought us a smuggled copy of *The Times* every evening, which he rented to each of us in turn at five shillings per hour. Even such a trivial thing as reading *The Times* was a dangerous undertaking, for anyone found with foreign newspapers was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Well, at any rate, we thought we were getting real news, until even that satisfaction was taken from us.

I remember that one evening I was very downhearted. The news in the paper was dreadful. The Allies were being defeated everywhere. Terribly upset, I went to a friend, a fellow-countryman, and told him of the bad outlook. He seemed astonished at my distress.

"Let me see your paper," he said. I showed it to him. After a glance he fetched his own copy. I could hardly believe my eyes. My copy of *The Times* was a perfect German-made forgery. It was *The Times*—paper, type, and all. Only the news from the front was not the same. After that we no longer believed in paying five shillings an hour for a copy of *The Times* "made in Germany."

It was now October, and I could do little more where I was, so I made up my mind to leave. I had been asked to go with a young Frenchman to the *Kommandantur*, the German headquarters, to try and obtain a travelling-permit for him. I had just managed to do so, and was about to leave the building, when a couple of soldiers stepped alongside of me, while a third crossed his bayonet before my chest, and I was ordered to follow them.

I was a prisoner in German hands, and taken in their very midst!

I did not feel at all cheerful when the two soldiers pushed me into a room and the door closed behind me. With a snarled "Wait," one of them took up a watchful position in front of it, holding a rifle ready for instant use. Two hours passed thus in silence, and I guessed that the Germans were applying some of their university professor's psychology. I knew that every officer had received minute instructions on "How to deal with the enemy." Nothing breaks a man's nerve so much as a long wait in suspense and silence.

But I had studied psychology, also, and I thought that this long wait might be very convenient, too, for working out a plan and making up a story to deceive the Boche. So I spent my time very usefully trying to foresee all the various questions that might be put to me.

I calmly reviewed the facts. The men for whom I had obtained travelling-permits were gone. There was nothing to connect me with them. The officials in the office where applications were made were much too busy to take note of everyone. In fact, I had noticed several times that the place was in great confusion, and not at all like the usual orderly, methodical offices that one sees in Germany.

I was now posing as an Italian, born in Naples, and my name was Mario Salvatore Morelli. I knew that the Italian Consul would bear out my statements. I had no incriminating papers of any kind on me. So far so good!

Suddenly my heart missed a beat. I remembered that in my pocket was a leather wallet, and on that wallet was a monogram. "H. A. W.!" Quickly I put my hand into the front of my jacket. But the stolid-looking sentry was watching, and seized my arm.

"Ah! A revolver, eh?" he grunted.

I could not help laughing. My thoughts had been so far from an armed resistance. Smilingly I allowed him to search me, which he did very thoroughly, evidently very much surprised at finding no weapon. I then opened my pocket-book and showed him that it was full of money, explaining that my movement had been an instinctive one, to feel if I still had it. In putting it back, however, I managed to tear off the deadly bit of gold forming the three initials which certainly did *not* stand for M. S. Morelli.

Just as every criminal does, so one always seems to forget some small detail. I mentally went over the contents of my pockets again. Was there anything else that might give me away? I did not think so, but I had lost some of my assurance. At last the door opened and an officer stalked in.

I was told to undress, and my clothes were carefully examined by a man who was certainly a German police-detective. I had heard that they had brought a number of these with them. With deft fingers that told of long criminal practice, he felt all the seams and linings, but, to his annoyance, found nothing. The contents of my pockets were then examined. The fellow stared with suspicious eyes at the light-coloured spot where the monogram had been on my pocket-book, and I thanked my stars that I had got rid of that, just in time!

Finally he pounced on a telegram which I had received from Italy, from a friend to whom I had sent 500 francs, and which I had kept because it was addressed to me in my assumed name. I thought that it would be a further proof in my favour. It was worded: "500 letter received thanks." This saving of the one additional

word "francs" after the "five hundred" was to be my undoing.

"Ah!" said the detective, with evident satisfaction. "So! I thought there was something wrong! You have smuggled five hundred letters out, eh? You are one of those letter-smugglers!" Of course, I argued and explained, and showed him that the word "letter" was in the singular, and not "letters." It was too absurd, after what I really had been doing, to be suspected of letter-carrying.

Well, it was all no good. I was ordered to dress, and then taken upstairs to a large room in which there were a number of men, all apparently prisoners, but probably a German spy or two amongst them. As I entered they turned, with grins, to welcome me. I rubbed my eyes. These prisoners were playing billiards! I was quickly undeceived. They *were* playing billiards, it is true, but with a broomstick and three oranges. They had been there for weeks, and had invented a number of games to pass the time. Except for the one table and a bench, the room was bare.

We all slept, twenty men together, on a tiled floor. It was very cold, but this did not matter, for no one slept very much. I knew that at best I should now be a prisoner until the end of the war, and the thought was not pleasant.

The next day I was put through a searching examination; and finally an Italian was brought in to see if I really was from that country. He winked at me very pleasantly as he began talking to me, and, if he detected any trace of foreign accent in my fluent speech, he kept it to himself.

The Italian Consul also intervened and demanded my

release, insisting that I had done nothing wrong, and that, since Italy was not at war with Germany, there was no reason why I should be detained. I should, perhaps, have been released had they not had the excuse of that silly telegram. Still, as letter-carriers were generally shot at once, I could not complain over-much at being merely kept a prisoner.

Of the weary months that followed I will not speak. They were the experience so many unfortunates had to go through, and I was no worse off than they. That I was suspected of not being an Italian I felt certain, for they pointed out to me several times, that, whereas many British were tattooed, as I was, no Italian ever bore such marks.

On Christmas morning about five o'clock they made their great bluff to try and obtain a true statement from me.

Two sentries came in and ordered me to dress quickly. I was to be shot !

They led me out into a courtyard and placed me against a wall. A file of soldiers lined up ten paces away, rifles in hand. My shirt was torn open, and a Boche officer came up to bandage my eyes. Before doing so he pulled out a note-book, and asked me if I had any message to send to my family or to my friends. It would make no difference now what I said, and he would see that my last message was delivered, especially if it was to friends in Belgium ! He was too eager and solicitous. It was so obviously a trick that I coldly informed him that my people were in Italy, and that I had no friends in Belgium to whom I wished to send a message.

He appeared very disappointed, and, forgetting to bandage my eyes went to consult with a man in mufti.

After some unpleasant minutes of waiting, he came back and said, "Ach, ja ; I had quite forgotten that this is Christmas. We do not shoot prisoners on this day. So you may go back to your cell."

This was their last attempt. A few days later I was taken to a place near Verviers, a frontier town, from where I was to be removed later to a prison-camp in Germany. In this little village I was at last free from the constant questioning and badgering. There were only a handful of elderly men of the *Landsturm* on guard there, under the command of a very young Saxon lieutenant.

He was not a bad sort as Germans go ; and I was allowed to buy extra food, and also allowed to play cards with him and lose my money. I had been there but four weeks or so when one day, going his rounds, he came into the species of cellar-rooms where I was imprisoned alone, and told me that he had been ordered to move on to Brussels. He had never been there, he said, and asked me many questions about the cafés and places of diversion.

I told him that, ordinarily, it was a very lively town. Then he led the conversation up to money, and said that unfortunately he had not got much, and, as he fully expected to die at some period during the war, it would be p easant to have a good time before going under. I saw what he was driving at, and suggested that there were ways and means of getting money.

"How, for instance?" he queried, looking long and searchingly at me.

"Oh, there are prisoners," I replied lightly, "who would pay a big sum to be free."

"Would you?" he rapped out.

"Why, yes. I, for one, and willingly."

The Saxon said nothing further then ; but the next day I was invited to his room again for a game of cards. He had a bottle of spirits by his elbow ; and I saw at once when I came in that he had been drinking more than was good for him. After we had been playing in silence for some time, he suddenly said, " How much would you pay if I let you go, and how would you obtain more money ? What you have with you is not enough."

I thought for a moment, and then told him that I was willing to pay 2,500 francs (about £100), if he saw to it that a letter reached the Italian Consul in Brussels. I should get the money from him.

He thought this over for a while, and then informed me that £100 was not enough. Even though, in the confusion of the advance, it was possible to arrange for my freedom, he was risking his life and bitter disgrace besides, and he would not do it for less than double the amount I had offered. I agreed to this. I knew that the Consul would be easily enough able to obtain the money from my friends.

After some more talk he gave me pen and ink, and told me to write my letter. Here was the danger, however, for it might, after all, be a trick, so I merely wrote to the Consulate asking the secretary, Signor Dezutti, to forward the sum required by some safe means, or, if possible, to come himself with the money, explaining that it was urgently needed. The lieutenant looked suspiciously at the letter written in Italian, and told me to translate it, which I did. I afterwards learned that it was taken to the Consulate at once by a dispatch-rider.

Signor Dezutti came to see me a few days later, with the amount in gold. We had a long talk, and he told me that it was quite impossible for the lieutenant to do

anything but to merely let me go, and that I should be taken again at once if I tried to get to Holland or France. He advised me to go very warily, as it was likely that, once the ransom was paid, I should be shot, so as to get rid of myself and at the same time of all proof of the transaction.

However, this had to be risked. After filling in an Italian travelling-pass for me, the secretary promised that he would communicate with Signor Sala, his colleague at Cologne, who would do all he could for me, if I were willing to risk going through Germany as an Italian returning to Italy. This I agreed to, and we paid the Saxon officer his money.

I was allowed to leave the lieutenant's quarters the same evening, escorted by Signor Dezutti and the German himself, who conducted me to the railway-station and waited until I entered a train bound for Germany. I felt very elated and happy to be out of my cell ; but I knew that I now carried my life in my hands, and that at any moment I might be stopped, and, if I failed to give a satisfactory account of myself, treated as a spy and shot.

I relied on the very audacity of the plan. It was less likely to seem suspicious that a man should be travelling in Germany by train, as if he had a perfect right to do so, than if he tried to get to one of the frontiers on foot.

The dangerous time would come when I got near the Swiss border. In the meantime I might learn a lot that could be of use to the Allies, and so I kept my eyes and ears well open. I arrived at Cologne without much trouble, although the feeling that everyone was looking at me was terrible. I found the Consulate near the station, and explained matters to Signor Sala, who said that he

had received a telegram from his colleague in Brussels, and would be glad to help me as much as he could.

The Consul asked me to wait, as he was expecting his secretary to bring a lady there after dark. She was a French agent, who was being actively searched for by the military, and they wished to help her to get away.

He added that I was, of course, at liberty to refuse to take her along with me, as my own position was already sufficiently serious. But (this with a shrug and a smile) if the woman were not out of the town by morning she would be caught and executed as a spy. He knew, he said, that the British were a chivalrous race, and always ready to help a woman. Besides, she had been doing useful work for the Allies, and it was only right that we should assist her.

There was nothing else for me to do but to help her, of course, though I admit that I was not very hopeful of getting out, nor could I imagine why she would be safer with me.

The Consul explained that they could take no active part in the scheme officially; but my papers could be altered to Morelli and wife, and the important thing was that I spoke Italian, whereas she did not.

About an hour after dark the secretary arrived and ushered in a pale, slim woman with a fine face and bold, daring, black eyes. Since I had undertaken to take her with me, it was suggested that we had better leave at once and continue on the straight road to Switzerland.

I did not like the plan. If the woman was wanted by the military authorities, I knew that the detectives on duty at every railway-station would see her and stop us. The river—the Rhine—was near the town, and flowed past the places which we wished to reach. If we could

get a boat, aided by the darkness, although we should have to fight the current, we could be far away when dawn came, and, abandoning the boat, we should get along some distance further by other means until we reached a small wayside station.

My intention was, instead of going by the main line, to continue by a less-known way to the Black Forest, where I had originally intended to spend the summer, and get through to Switzerland by some means at a spot where the border was not well guarded. The people of the Black Forest are almost Swiss, and hate the Prussians. Also, I knew every inch of that part of the country.

My plan was finally accepted, the woman saying nothing, well content, I suppose, to have us planning for her. My travelling-pass received the addition of "and wife," and the young secretary set out to find the boat. In about an hour he came back and told us that he had borrowed one from a friend which he thought would do.

I obtained some felt wherewith to muffle the oars, and the four of us then walked down to where the Rhine flowed past the town. The boat was fairly roomy, and, after seeing my newly acquired "wife" comfortably seated, I pushed off. It was eerie work paddling along in the dark. The boat had a sail, but I did not wish to make use of that until much later, after we had left the town far behind us.

A couple of hours passed uneventfully. My companion was not inclined to talk, and I was rather glad of that. Before long it began to rain, so I made a cover for both of us with a sail, and, keeping the boat near the bank, where the current was not so powerful, we were soon out in the quiet countryside.

A fairly strong wind was blowing in the right direction, luckily, since tacking in the dark would have been awkward work. So I decided to hoist the sail, the rain being no longer troublesome.

Just before dawn we saw a fairly large town in the distance, and, as we were tired out, I tied the boat under a bush, and, after making my companion comfortable, we both went to sleep.

It would never do to go into the town too early, but, as soon as I thought it safe, I bade my companion wait there while I spied out the land. I found a fairly large hotel, and, since we could neither travel by train, as yet, nor keep to the boat by daylight, the best thing was to try to sleep through the day, and travel with the boat again during the night. This we did.

The second night on the water was better. We were getting used to the silence and the sounds of the dark river.

The next day we abandoned our skiff, and, after walking for some distance, managed to get a local train going to Offenburg, the starting-place of all my troubles.

It was from Offenburg that the line started to the Black Forest. On the train were several officers, and one of them came up and spoke to my companion. I immediately spat voluble Italian at him, upon which he retired; but I noticed that he spoke to several officials, and finally to the conductor, pointing to our compartment. Just as the fellow started to come to us the train ran into the station, and I saw that on the opposite side a train, which was going up into the mountains, was on the point of starting.

With a happy inspiration, I shouted to the conductor: "Train Triberg?"—pointing to the other.

From force of habit he said, "*Ya, schnell*" (Yes, quick). Glad of the chance, we rushed across the platform and jumped into a compartment just as the train started. A near thing. I felt fairly sure that the officer would not trouble any more about us, and would be only too pleased to shunt the responsibility.

Now we were nearing our last lap, the border, and my heart began thumping in anticipation. It was dark when we reached Singen, the frontier station. Here an officer and a squad of soldiers came into the train.

"Passports!"

Would we get through? It seemed ages until our turn came. He spoke to me, and I again replied in Italian.

"Ah, Italians," he said, and held out his hand for my pass. This he examined at length. Then he pulled a book from his pocket, and began going down each page, looking at us every few seconds. Evidently it was his list of those to be stopped. I pretended not to notice, and chatted lightly to my companion in Italian, of which she understood nothing. I saw that she sat much too stiffly, with clenched teeth and terror in her eyes. I swear I could see her heart thumping under her blouse. This would never do! In a moment she would scream.

Pretending to laugh, I pointed out of the window at some of the people passing, placing my hand at the same time reassuringly on hers. It was cold as ice! And a shiver went through me.

In the meantime, the torture went on. Page after page was turned by the German, then he would examine our pass. Would it never end?

Finally, without a word, the officer turned and went down the corridor.

Now for it, I thought. He has gone to fetch his men.

Some moments passed, then another man in uniform came to me and told me to open a small handbag which I had.

Ye gods ! We were in Switzerland ! The train was going on, and this was no German, but a Swiss Customs official ; I could really have embraced him. Turning to the woman, I saw that she was lying back in a dead faint. The strain had been too much for her.

.

We reached Zurich that same night, where I bade her good-bye. Before she went she showed me a sheaf of documents which she had carried hidden in her dress. " I am taking them to Paris," she said. " Joffre will be glad of them. God bless you, Englishman ! But you little knew the risk you ran ! "

.

I never saw Nurse Cavell again. How she died we all know. When our troops entered Brussels after the Armistice a friend gave me the proclamation which I have reproduced. It told of the sentencing of many of those who had worked with me during those first terrible months. Amongst them was Madame Baudart and Nurse Cavell.

THE TRIAL OF PRINCESS FAHMY

CHAPTER X

THE TRIAL OF PRINCESS FAHMY

MOST of the adventures I have disinterred from my notes, until now, deal with events that have happened abroad. This is merely due to the fact that I have taken them in chronological order, and not because I have not had quite as many exciting experiences in England. I could fill a large volume with the strange cases in which I have acted as interpreter at the Old Bailey and at the High Courts of Justice.

It is true that the Paris Sûreté has given me a number of weird souvenirs, but Scotland Yard has a much more marvellous collection, of which the world has never heard and probably never will, for the men who uphold law and order in our Island, and who have made its capital the most law-abiding city in the world, do not seek publicity ! They are modest and retiring, and would be most surprised if someone pointed out to them that their lives are full of interesting, novel, and dangerous experiences. They do their duty and, by doing it, feel that they justify in a measure the position of trust which they hold.

I should like very much to lift the veil, but, as I am still hoping to take a part in many cases, my lips are sealed ; at any rate, until I retire.

However there are one or two tales of tragedies, resulting from the clashing of human passion and strife, of which I may speak freely. One of these is the killing of the young and strikingly handsome Egyptian, Prince

Ali Fahmy, by his charming Parisian wife, Marie Marguerite, formerly known in Paris as Maggie Meller, who shot him one night at the Savoy Hotel, in the Strand, where they were staying.

I will tell the story as I heard it in my undoubtedly privileged position as the court interpreter, and also all that I learned and observed in my interviews with the Princess.

.

On the night of the 10th of July, 1923, during a lull in the most terrible thunderstorm that ever visited London, three loud reports, which sounded sharply vicious in contrast to the heavy artillery of the heavens, startled the already overwrought nerves of one of the staff of the Savoy Hotel, on night-duty on the first floor.

Rushing along the corridor, his horrified gaze encountered the body of a young man, stretched out face downwards, on the thick, soft carpet, near the door of the magnificent suite occupied by the Prince and Princess Fahmy.

Kneeling beside the body of the Prince, wringing her hands and crying out incoherently, was his beautiful young wife, robed in a gauzy, white dressing-gown, which was already stained red in patches by the life-blood of her husband.

A Browning pistol was still on the floor beside her.

Not ten minutes earlier the night porter, named Beatty, had passed the couple, standing before their door and talking excitedly. He had wondered how two people, so young, rich, and handsome, could look so angry and quarrelsome, for it seemed to him that on these two the gods had apparently showered all their gifts.

The manager had come running up, anxious, above all, for the good name of his hotel ; and a doctor had arrived a few minutes later, but was only able to inform them that Fahmy Bey was dead !

All three bullets had taken effect. One, the first, had grazed his neck from back to front ; the second, had entered his right shoulder, coming out under the left arm-pit ; and the third had pierced his brain.

The secretary, Said Enani, who had been the dead man's friend, was at once called from his room, and fainted when he learned what had taken place. Marie Marguerite Fahmy was arrested and taken to Cannon Row, where she was immediately questioned by a detective who spoke a little French.

Such was the climax of the drama ! Strange and perplexing indeed was the sequence of events that led up to it.

.

Said Enani first met the young man, then known as Ali Khamel Fahmy, in Paris. They were both frequenting the pleasure resorts of the gay city, although neither of them was well off. Fahmy had only an allowance from his father. As they were fellow countrymen, a close friendship soon sprang up between them.

Ali Fahmy was in the habit of going to the famous Montmartre café called l'Abbaye Thelème. He had confessed to his friend that he was greatly attracted by a dashing young Frenchwoman, known as Maggie Meller, who was generally to be found supping and dancing there.

Said Enani thereupon contrived to make the lady's acquaintance, and introduced his friend to her. Unfortunately for Ali Fahmy, Maggie Meller was a woman

whose life was spent in squandering riches, and, as Fahmy was not yet wealthy, he had to content himself with adoration from a distance.

Then came the news of his father's death, through which he became a Bey—a title akin to that of Lord rather than Prince—and, what was better still, £8,000,000, the enormous fortune left by his father, became his. Maggie Meller was then at Deauville, and thither Ali Fahmy and his shadow, Said Enani, who had now become his secretary, went together.

At the famous watering-place the Bey found that the news of his sudden riches had opened all doors to him. Only the woman of whom he was enamoured kept aloof for a while, always appearing surrounded by assiduous admirers, and taking no notice of the young man.

Finally he took the bull by the horns, and informed Madame Meller that he would like to marry her on his return from Egypt, where he had to go to enter into possession of his father's wealth.

The Bey's proposal of marriage changed things completely! Ali Fahmy left for Egypt with his adored one's promise to come to Cairo and marry him there.

Unfortunately, after his departure, Madame Meller returned to Paris, where the pleasures of that gay city claimed her once more. Ali Fahmy wrote several letters from Cairo, but still his beloved one seemed to hesitate before coming to join him; so he persuaded his secretary to inform her by telegram that her fiancé was very ill. Upon this she at last made up her mind to take leave of her numerous friends and admirers, and, accompanied by her sister, she travelled to Cairo.

On her arrival her devoted Ali, who thought it wise to dazzle his future wife by his wealth and position,

met her with a large retinue and six motor-cars, and conducted the two sisters to his palace. Unfortunately the marriage could not take place at once, as there were obstacles of a religious and legal nature to be overcome.

While the lawyers laboured to arrange matters, Prince Fahmy—as he now called himself—and his fiancée startled and surprised all Cairo by the magnificence of their fêtes and receptions, and the mad series of their eccentricities.

The necessary formalities were longer than the Prince's patience, and at the end of a few weeks the sister was sent back to Paris, while her Egyptian lover persuaded Madame Meller to accompany him on his wonderful yacht for a trip up the Nile to Luxor.

Once on the yacht, she was, to all intents and purposes his wife, and called the Princess Fahmy by everyone. Her maid came with her, and the secretary, Said Enani, also. Said had obviously become jealous of the influence the Princess wielded over his rich friend, for he tried many times to stir up strife between them. According to the Frenchwoman's story, a strange and unpleasant life now began for her.

On the yacht she was surrounded by dusky servants only, and could understand nothing of their language. Her lover was absolute master over everyone, and what was worse, the secretary hated her. During her evidence in the witness-box she told of constant quarrels, and of long conversations between Ali and Said in Arabic. She said that she was kept almost a prisoner on board, and that several times Prince Ali struck her. Once the blow he gave her was so brutal that he dislocated her jaw.

Of course Sir Edward Marshall Hall, who defended the Frenchwoman, made the most of this incident when

cross-examining the secretary, Said, and painted the Egyptian lover in very lurid colours. I daresay that his sudden accession to unlimited wealth turned his head and that he developed megalomania. His native servants, naturally, were almost his slaves, and the hereditary attitude of the Eastern mind when dealing with women made him overbearing. Perhaps there was a latent strain of the bully in him also, for Madame Fahmy told the court of an incident on the boat that was confirmed by others.

A native sailing-boat happened to cross the bows of the yacht, forcing her to alter her course. This so enraged her owner that he gave his captain the order to give chase to the little craft, which was manned by *fellaheen*. As soon as the yacht overhauled them he forced the native captain to come on board, threatening to sink his boat if he did not, and then beat him savagely with a whip, for daring to cross the river in front of his ship.

She told also of an occasion when the Prince swore on his holy book, the Koran, that he would kill her and that, in consequence of this threat, she managed to send a letter to her Egyptian lawyer, Maître Assuoir.

This letter was produced in court, and translated by me. I found it to be a very strange document ! In it she told of the threat Ali had made, of his oath on the Koran, and insisted that, should she at any time disappear, Ali should be made responsible. All this took place before the wedding. One wonders, therefore, that yet she married him.

Finally they returned from Luxor ; and when in Cairo, and free again to do as she liked, Madame Fahmy renounced her Catholic religion and became a Mohammedan.

It seems that Ali stated that she would either have to marry him according to Mohammedan law or not at all. She consented to do so—losing by that act the right of divorce for herself, giving him also the right to have three other wives and to be able to divorce her at any time by simply saying three times, in the presence of two people, “I divorce you!”

In the matrimonial contract she only obtained two conditions—the sum of £6,000 was to be paid to her if the Prince divorced her, and she was allowed the right to retain European dress.

Whether they were by nature quarrelsome, or whether he had already begun to tire of her, I do not know, but quarrels now became a daily occurrence. Said Enani was always between them; and in court Madame Fahmy complained that she had only black servants around her, whose mission it was to watch and spy on her. In a letter, also produced in court, written by Ali to his family, he mentioned that he was “training” Marie to her position as wife of an Eastern Prince, and that this training was according to tradition!

After visiting many towns they came to London. Here it appears that the Egyptian several times stated his intention to divorce her if she did not do as he wished, and reminded her that under the Mussulman law he could do so. A strange life they must have led. Each slept with a pistol beside the bed, ready to hand. Strangely enough her pistol had been a present from her husband, who had even obligingly explained its mechanism to her.

One night they had gone to their room earlier than usual, after a quarrel at table in the dining-room of the *hôte*. Madame Fahmy, as she got up alone, remarked

to the waiter, to explain why she was not dining with her husband, "The Prince has just threatened to kill me!"

A short time afterwards Ali also got up and followed her, leaving the secretary to finish the meal alone. Said Enani swore in the witness-box that this threat had never been made. The quarrel must have continued upstairs, until the awful thunderstorm, which all Londoners remember, began.

We have only Madame Fahmy's story to give us an idea of what happened afterwards.

The end of it was that at about two in the morning she fired those three shots at her husband, with the pistol he had given her. The third shot entered the right temple and killed him instantly. The question of divorce had been settled permanently!

When the manager came rushing up, Madame Fahmy exclaimed in French, "*Mon Dieu!* What have I done? What have I done?" and he replied, "You know very well what you have done."

She was arrested, brought up at Bow Street, and committed for trial on the charge of having murdered her husband.

Sir Edward Marshall Hall was retained for the defence, together with Sir Henry Curtis Bennett. Mr. Percival Clarke conducted the case for the Crown. Numerous other eminent barristers were engaged in the case, and several Eastern lawyers held watching briefs for the family.

I confess that it was with a thrill that I received instructions to act as interpreter. I have rarely seen a court at the Old Bailey so packed with notabilities. Mr. Justice Rigby Swift was the judge.

After taking the interpreter's oath I was told to ask the prisoner the usual formula, "Guilty or not guilty?" Turning to the dock, I had my first sight of the woman everyone had been talking about. I need not describe her. The photograph which she gave me after the trial shows her clearly. Pale she was, of course, and in deep mourning. It struck me as peculiar that a woman should be in mourning for the man she had herself killed.

I put the question to her, and her answer, if low, was a firm "Not guilty," and so the trial began.

Mr. Percival Clarke opened the case for the Crown. Quiet and moderate was his speech, but every point was clear and telling. He showed that the position of the wounds tended to prove that the Prince had his back turned when attacked; also that Madame Fahmy was a woman of experience, who knew very well what she was doing when she went for a trip on the yacht with Fahmy Bey, since she had been to Egypt before.

The first witness for the prosecution was Said Enani.

He denied that any act of brutality had ever been committed by the dead man. Cross-examined, he admitted that he had once seen Fahmy Bey slap the woman's face.

Then came the doctor and the detectives, and finally the night porter from the Savoy, whose evidence I thought very significant, for he stated that a moment before hearing the shots fired he had seen the Prince bending down with his back to the door of his suite, whistling for a little pet dog he possessed.

Sir Edward, in cross-examination, ridiculed the idea of a man being able to hear a whistle during a thunderstorm.

Of course I had little to do at first. My work began

when Sir Marshall Hall called out in his loud, penetrating voice, " Marie Marguerite Fahmy."

A ripple of excitement passed along the crowded benches as a slim, dainty woman came through the court and took her stand in the witness-box. I repeated the oath to her in French, and her reply came, barely in a whisper, "*Je jure*" ("I swear").

A dramatic moment was when I handed her the fatal pistol. I fully expected that she would shrink and hesitate. Nothing of the sort! As unconcernedly as if it had been a toy, she took the deadly, blue weapon in her slim hand, and at the demand of her counsel tried to snap back the barrel. Her hand did not tremble, and her answers were assured and loud.

Her story was one of constant persecution and cruelty that had made of her life a hell. Very unsavoury details were mentioned, and a lady barrister from Paris took my place while these intimate questions were translated.

Finally her story neared the tragedy. The thunder-storm had unnerved her, overwrought as she already was by the threat Ali had uttered at dinner. She knew that he would soon come up, furious that she had left the table. Afraid of what he might do, she took up the pistol that was always on her bedside-table. Pointing it out of the window she pulled the trigger. The sharp crack told her that it was loaded, but—and the defence made the most of this—she said that she did not know that a Browning reloaded itself automatically. Her statement was that she now thought the pistol empty and harmless, to be used only for frightening her husband.

As she had feared, Ali came in. A violent scene followed, during which he ill-treated her. A white evening gown from which some beads had been torn, was

produced as evidence. So far all was clear, but now the story became less coherent. For some reason Ali left the room and began calling and whistling to his little dog, of which it seems he was very fond. As I have mentioned, the night porter had already stated that a few moments before he heard the shots, as he turned round a bend of the corridor, he heard a whistle, and saw the Prince stooping, and calling his dog. To most people it would seem that the shots must have been fired at him while he was doing this, if one judges by the position of the wounds.

The court decided, however, that this was not so. Sir Edward Marshall Hall, in his dramatic speech, said that Fahmy Bey was crouching in that Oriental way of his, like a wild beast, ready to spring at his wife.

Without realising what she was doing, Madame Fahmy raised the weapon, hoping to frighten her husband ; quite unconsciously she pulled the trigger, and was even unaware that she had fired, until she saw Ali fall, bleeding, to the ground. Horrified at what she had done, she dropped on to her knees beside him, calling to him to speak. It was useless, she had killed him.

On Friday evening everyone expected the case to finish, but it ended with an adjournment until the Saturday morning, and I learned later that the night had been a dreadful one of waiting and suspense for the accused.

The next day the summing-up, which had begun the day before, ended at last, and the jury retired to consider their verdict. With a beating heart, I saw them come back, and took my stand just below his lordship, facing the white cheeks and staring eyes of the prisoner, now on her feet. My breath came with difficulty. What would my voice be called upon to convey to this trembling

woman, already flinching as if expecting a blow? Life or death?

When the words "Not guilty" were heard, the crowd in the gallery cheered loudly.

"Clear the court!" came sternly from the judge.

Only when this was done did he say to me, "Tell her that the jury have found her not guilty, and she is therefore free."

The ordeal that had lasted so long was over.

Crowds gathered outside the court to cheer Madame Fahmy as she left the Old Bailey, but they caught no glimpse of her. While they were yelling and waving their hats at the sister, under the impression that it was the Princess, she herself was being attended by the doctor from Holloway and her own doctor, who had been hurriedly sent for. Her nerves had given way at last, and she was in a state of collapse. Small wonder!

I followed her to Prince's Hotel, where her sister had retained a suite for her, and was one of the first to congratulate her on her acquittal. She had somewhat recovered by then, and, surrounded by friends and relatives, lay stretched on a couch, smoking a cigarette and sipping a glass of Benedictine. Her greeting was a charming smile and the words, "Thank you, Mr. Interpreter."

While I was there a telephone-call came through for her. It was the prison doctor inquiring after her health. To my astonishment, she spoke over the wire to him in halting English, saying, "Oh, thank you, thank you, I am so happy."

At parting, Madame Fahmy gave me a letter thanking me for my sympathy, signed and dated, as a memento. She left shortly afterwards for Paris.

THE BLUE ANCHOR MYSTERY AND
JEAN PIERRE VAQUIER

CHAPTER XI

THE BLUE ANCHOR MYSTERY AND JEAN PIERRE VAQUIER

IF France has had its *cause célèbre* in the trial of Landru, England had one not less extraordinary—that of Jean Pierre Vaquier.

Both men in their way were mysterious, unfathomable, and abnormal, but, whereas the motives that led Landru to murder were sordid and bestial, those that actuated the little Gascon are less easily understandable. In fact, Justice Ivory, when summing up, was himself so well aware of this that he felt bound to point it out to the jury in the following words :

“ If you are satisfied that Vaquier was the person who placed that poison in that spot, intending Jones to take it, it is not necessary that you should look for, much less be satisfied with the existence of, any motive for this crime ! ”

No ! For, looked at from every sane and normal point of view, no motive for killing the landlord of the Blue Anchor Inn can be discovered.

However, I am not going to analyse the case itself ; I have not the right. Twelve good men and true found Vaquier guilty of murder, and he was hanged ! *Acta est fabula !*

.

Certainly he was the strangest man I had ever met. But then he was from Gascony, and the people of that sunny land are a race apart. No

doubt, as Daudet says, "It is not their fault, it is the sunshine!"

.

One morning I was informed that I was to go to Woking to act as interpreter in the police-court proceedings against a Frenchman who was accused of murder.

I had heard of the "Mystery of the Blue Anchor," as it was then called, but had not paid much attention to it.

I understood it to be but another "triangle" drama, without much interest.

When I arrived at the little country town, on a pleasant June morning, Superintendent Boshier of the Surrey police met me and called me into his office in order to explain what the case was. He also placed before me several documents in French, with their English translation, asking me to verify them. A glance at the first statement Vaquier had made at once awakened my interest. The writer of it could be no ordinary man; nor could any ordinary man, charged with murder, sign his name with such a flourish and so many embellishments. Instinctively I felt that I was going to see some creature quite out of the common.

I was unprepared, nevertheless, for a personality as strange and perplexing as that of the little Frenchman!

After the case had been outlined to me I took my stand near the dock, in the tiny court-room.

Around the table were some of the eminent men who would now play their part in the trial. Looking strangely different without their "togæ" and wigs, were the counsels for the Crown and for the defence. To my right was Major Watkins, who had acted as interpreter for Mr. Hunt the solicitor during his interviews with the accused.

Then Vaquier entered the dock! I first saw him as a

little, bearded man, whose body seemed even more tiny compared to his large head, crowned with a mass of curly, black hair.

The deadly pallor of the face was accentuated by his dark beard and fierce, bristling moustache ; while two large eyes—dark yellow and feline, with contracted pupils—looked fearfully around the room.

His legs were twisted with rheumatism on that first morning, and his small but muscular hands trembled visibly.

Little by little, during the long opening of the case by the prosecution, the man's assurance returned ; until, by the time the first witness was called, he had filled out—broadened, straightened—and completely regained the composure which after that rarely deserted him.

As soon as the first witness was sworn Vaquier drew from his pocket a sheaf of foolscap paper and half a dozen pencils. With a flourish, he headed the first sheet "*Affaire Vaquier !* "

Those two words have burned themselves into my memory ! Afterwards, when I knew the man better, I understood that it was natural he should have called his fight with justice "*Affaire Vaquier* " ; thinking it at least as important as "*l'Affaire Dreyfus*," or others that have passed into history ; but at that time it seemed to me incredible that any man should have the impudence to pose not only before the world, but before himself. Vanity was the keynote to his nature. How many of us, I wonder, could stand in the dock on a capital charge and calmly head our notes, notes that may come to mean life or death, with—" The case of X " ?

As I translated the first answer of the witness, Vaquier bent forward, with his hand to his ear, and said in a

deep, hoarse voice, "*Je suis un peu sourd*" ("I am hard of hearing"); then, when I raised my voice, he bowed, actually smiled, and began furiously scribbling.

Vaquier's notes were wonderful! His constant writing has been described and commented on by all the Press but how many saw his notes? They were so extraordinary that I read them whenever I could get near enough. All his energy, his vitality, his anger, his biting sarcasms, were committed to paper. He could not speak in this English court, but, *Grand Dieux!* he could write; and he did! He must have believed that these hundreds of sheets would be read some day, for they contained not only notes of the evidence, but descriptions, remarks, and humorous asides.

At the close of the first day, as he was leaving the dock, he said to me, "*Interessant, hein?*" ("An interesting case this?"); and it was—assuredly!

.

It all began in far away Biarritz at the Victoria Hotel.

The drawing-room is full of people, and at a table in the centre is a large wireless installation. A dapper little Frenchman, elegantly dressed, beard and moustache well cared for, is lecturing on wireless.

He tunes in on the B.B.C. wave-length, and, turning to a slim Englishwoman, who seems to be quite alone, tells her that she can listen to English music.

She does not understand; but, drawn by his impelling manner, sits down and listens in. Her thoughts are far away, back in England. She comes to herself with a start, to find the little Frenchman standing before her smiling and bowing.

The next morning they met again, and he addressed

her. She tells him that she does not understand French, and he exclaimed, "*Dictionnaire ! dictionnaire !*"

Glad of any diversion, in a country where she does not understand the language, curious also to know what he wished to say, she went into town and bought a dictionary.

They met on the sands, and we can imagine them sitting together and laughing over absurd misunderstandings. Each pronouncing with difficulty words in the other's language. A strange courtship indeed !

His first question was, "Widow or divorced ?" She searched for and showed him the word *mariée*, and, holding up two fingers, gave him to understand that there were two children. So it started ! The novelty of it attracting and amusing both of them. No doubt they got on famously !

He then bethought himself of an invention, for the sale of which he was negotiating in France—a mincing machine ! Life has these little humorous touches.

I myself examined this machine at the Woking police-court. It was most ingenious, for it minces the meat, makes sausages, and weighs them. But could one imagine a more incongruous appendage to a love-story ?

They went together to Sens, near Paris, to fetch the working model. "I shall make much money in England," he explained to her. "The English are great meat-eaters. They will welcome this machine." It was his first visit to England !

So he came to London, and after staying at the Russell Hotel he went to Byfleet. One gleans from his statements, and some of the statements of the witnesses, how strange the ways of the good people of this charming

Surrey town must have appeared to him, and how strange and "foreign" he must have seemed to them.

He was always up at 6 a.m. His restless energy gave him no respite.

Then he would go for a walk with the dog. He was fond of dogs. In all his statements he speaks of the dog. Once he said, "Mrs. Jones said to me, 'Bagages!' meaning 'Pack and go!'" This hurt me very much, and I went for a walk with the dog." Yes, no need for a dictionary to make a dog understand, if one feels sad and lonely.

It has been stated that he followed Mrs. Jones about, and would not eat unless she shared his meals. She and the dog were his only friends there!

He was alien and strange to everyone else. "That Frenchman" to the hotel staff, and "That foreigner" to all the customers. Some of these even began to shun the place, because of his dark, silent, watchful presence.

Mr. Alfred Poynter Jones, who was the landlord of the Blue Anchor Inn, was a man who drank heavily.

Vaquier related how, many times, he had assisted him in an intoxicated condition to his room.

Was it because of this that Vaquier plotted to kill the man? Perhaps he thought to rid the woman he loved of a companion who made her unhappy.

One morning the Frenchman came downstairs at six o'clock as usual, but, instead of going to warm himself at the gas-fire in the coffee-room, he sat in the bar-parlour, huddled in an arm chair, and dressed in a thick overcoat. The servant was cleaning and dusting, and he had to watch for an opportunity to introduce the fatal dose of strychnine into the bottle of salts of which

Jones always took a dose after his drinking-bouts in order to clear his head. This bottle of salts was on the shelf above the fireplace.

At some time that morning, during a momentary absence of the servant, Vaquier must have added the poison to these salts. Then he waited for the coming of his victim. What happened everyone remembers. Jones came downstairs and, going into the bar, fetched a tumbler of water, to this he added what was left of the salts. To his surprise they did not effervesce as usual. He remarked to his wife, who was also there, "These things won't fizz." Then, when he had swallowed them at a gulp, he exclaimed, "O God, they are bitter!"

His wife stated that she had a presentiment that something was wrong, and at once gave him an emetic.

Shortly afterwards, the first dreadful symptoms of strychnine poisoning began to appear—terror, trembling, and cold shivering. Vaquier, in the meantime, sat and watched. Then, when the first paroxysm had passed, he helped to carry the unfortunate man to his room. Dr. Carl, who was at once sent for, told how, on approaching the inn, he heard shrieks and groans. He explained to the court that extreme terror is one of the characteristics of strychnine poisoning. Within half an hour Jones was dead.

Vaquier during this time stayed outside the bedroom in which his victim lay dying—half fearful, perhaps, at what he had done. No doubt it was one thing to plan a murder, but another to assist at a strong man's agony.

During the time the doctor was in the bedroom Vaquier must have bethought himself of the fatal bottle, and

went into the scullery, where the servant was preparing hot water.

He told her in broken English that the doctor wanted medicine, and sent her upstairs. During her short absence he hunted feverishly for the bottle, which Mrs. Jones had placed in a drawer of the dresser. When this bottle was afterwards examined it had been rinsed out, although no one actually saw Vaquier do so.

The police were of course informed of the tragedy by the doctor. They at first thought it to be a case of suicide. Mrs. Jones indignantly repudiated this idea. They then began to investigate, and were for a time suspicious of Mrs. Jones herself. Whether Mrs. Jones actually accused Vaquier at once did not transpire. She stated that he said to her, "I did it, Mabs, for you." At all events, suspicion did soon fasten itself on the Gascon. He went to stay at an hotel in Woking, but was under constant observation.

I have been told that he knew this so well that he suggested to two of the newspaper reporters that they should meet him in a quiet lane with a motor-car and drive him to the coast. It would be like the man to imagine that he could have escaped so easily.

During his last days of liberty he played the "ladies' man," charmed everyone by his gaiety, and tried his best to make himself popular. Then, one evening, he was arrested and charged with the murder of Mr. Jones. A chemist named Bland had seen the Frenchman's photograph in a newspaper, and informed the police that this man had bought a deadly dose of strychnine, at his shop near Russell Square, some weeks previously. He remembered him well, because he had been a customer for some time, buying various chemicals and toilet

articles. The poison, Vaquier had told him, was for wireless experiments. A fact that made the buying of the strychnine more suspicious, in the opinion of the police, was that the poison-book was not signed "Vaquier" but "Wanker."

During the police-court proceedings at Woking .I became more and more interested in this strange man. As the rapid fire of question and answer went on, he became accustomed to listening for my translation, and would nod his head and repeat the simpler English words over and over, trying to fix them in his memory.

"You are giving me excellent English lessons," he once said, and, pointing to the magistrate, he added, with a slightly ironic smile, "And Monsieur le Juge is learning French."

Nothing escaped him. His keen sense of humour—Gallic humour—would seize upon the slightest incident, and show up the amusing side of it. I remember when a witness was called who was both undertaker and builder. Vaquier was at first incredulous. "What? Builder and undertaker? A builder of houses for dwellers both above and below ground, then."

When witness followed upon witness to state that they had *not* noticed the fatal bottle on the night before the crime, he yawned and said to me, "What is the use of calling those who did *not* see it? Why not call one who did?"

I remonstrated with him on his levity. His reply was, "He laughs best who laughs last—but I believe in laughing first!"

Mere bravado?

Perhaps; but I really think that it sprang from his wonderful exuberance. While reading a French paper

on wireless during a halt in the proceedings, he expressed his admiration of a new invention by two Englishmen—we are all familiar with it—and said that he thought that English people were great inventors. “But,” he added, with his usual shrug, “I have done even better. I do away with both accumulators and battery—*voilà*!—and I get hundreds of miles more.”

On the last day at Woking, before he was committed for trial, he was tragically pale, and when the magistrate pronounced the formal committal he swayed, and for a moment I thought he would fall. It was the last I saw of him until he stood in the dock at Guildford.

.

He had changed in a marked manner. Gone was his smile; his hair was greyer, his face drawn and white; his eyes had a haunted look, that spoke of sleepless nights and days of agony and suspense.

As he looked round the great hall packed with people I fancy I read his thoughts: “What! All these people, all these officers of the law, to see one poor little man suffer?”

Then he drew himself up and bowed punctiliously to the Judge. He did not meet my eyes for a long time, and I—I confess it—dreaded the moment when I should meet his. What a world of agony they expressed when at last he did look straight at me!

I shall never forget the last half-hour. I knew the dreadful sentence by heart, although, as yet, I had never had to translate it into French. I feared, if he were found guilty, that a violent outburst from him would follow. He had been restraining himself for so long—with difficulty. He wanted to talk; it was seething in him, this desire to explain, to talk, to be dramatic!

Already at Woking he tried several times to speak, and on one occasion, when Mrs. Whitewick was giving evidence, he could restrain himself no longer. Starting up, he shouted, "*Ca n'est pas vrai !*" ("It is a lie !") I had great difficulty in calming him.

Used to the French procedure, he could not understand why he was not allowed to interrogate the witnesses. Why did the Judge not address himself to him, and allow him to explain? Fortunately he had his paper and pencils; they were his safety-valve.

He only remained quiet under protest. Again and again he whispered to me, "Wait till I can speak, then I will tell them things. *Ca n'est pas fini.*" The last word had not been said. On the Friday—at last—he went into the witness-box, and as I caught the triumphant gleam in his eyes I prepared for a terrific afternoon.

Alas! like so many others, he forgot that silence is golden.

He came out of that witness-box crushed and disappointed. He had missed his effect.

Immediately he started to write out a long statement, which I saw he was, by hook or crook, determined to read. His pencil rushed from side to side of the paper. When Mr. Bruce Miller went into the box, his beard really bristled with indignation, because after only a few formal questions this witness was dismissed.

Whilst the jury were deliberating I could not keep still, and I must have looked what I felt, for a kindly constable brought me a glass of water.

Then the jury filed in, and Vaquier stood in the dock, pale, twitching, dazed, and when he bowed to the Judge, the old formula came into my mind which the Romans

used : “ *Ave Cæsar ! Morituri te salutant.* ” (“ Hail, Cæsar ! Those about to die salute you.”)

I translated the dreadful question, “ Have you anything to say why the Court should not pass the sentence of death upon you ? ” I really believe that he realised nothing of its import except that he was going to be allowed to speak.

His eyes flamed ; his lips trembled ; you could feel his whole being vibrate with the passionate desire to speak. Then he was told that the Court could only listen to a reason in law. It was the last straw ! Cheated again ! He *would* speak ; and his frantic outburst at the last was painful to all who witnessed it.

To the jury he stated calmly and politely, “ Gentlemen, your verdict is iniquitous.” Then the long-pent-up torrent of speech burst out : “ All liars ! All liars ! I will defend myself ! I have been betrayed.” And, struggling and shouting, he was dragged below.

From Guildford, Vaquier was taken to Wandsworth Prison and placed in the condemned cell.

On the journey there the Gascon in him had already conquered his despondency, and on his arrival he took the greatest interest in his surroundings.

The formalities of entry were commented upon with his usual sarcasm.

With the help of his now famous dictionary he explained to the warders that their weighing-machine was obsolete. He, Vaquier, had invented a much better one.

When his finger-prints were taken he wished to know how they were classified, and to what type his own belonged.

Father Robin, the kindly Father Superior of the

French Church in Leicester Place, called upon Vaquier the same evening and chatted with him for some time, comforting him.

His cell, near to the one occupied by Mahon, was a large, square room with a window looking out upon the grounds.

In front of this, at a large table, Vaquier spent his time in writing his memoirs and preparing his appeal.

Every day he went for a walk in the grounds, accompanied by two warders ; and, permission to do so having been granted him, took back to his cell many flowers—it was then July—wherewith to render his cell more cheerful.

He was very concerned with his menu, as he called his dietary card. The prison he called Wandsworth Palace.

To all who were allowed to visit him officially he stated his intention of making dramatic revelations when his appeal came to be heard, and hinted darkly at a terrible exposure in store for many.

I myself awaited the day of the appeal eagerly, wondering whether something extraordinary would really come to light.

Before the Frenchman was called into the curtained recess, where an appealing prisoner is allowed to stand, I was asked by Sir Curtis Bennett to go and speak to Vaquier, and to explain to him that once again he must remain silent—in his own interest. I found him sitting on a bench just outside the back of the court, between two warders. In his hands was gripped a whole pack of documents. “What, not speak?” he exclaimed, after I had given him his counsel’s message. “Why not? It’s my head I am defending? I must and will speak.”

It was only after a long argument that I convinced him and he promised me on his "honour" to remain silent.

Maître Odin, who had been sent by Vaquier's sister in Bordeaux to be present at the appeal, sat at the solicitor's table.

The appeal was, of course, merely a long legal argument, ending in a passionate, powerful speech by Sir Curtis Bennett. It was painful to see the little figure, with the disproportionate head, standing with folded hands, listening, while his fate was being decided, without understanding a single word of what was said.

I was told that nothing would be translated to him.

I accompanied Maître Odin to Wandsworth immediately after the appeal had been dismissed.

The French lawyer was not allowed to see Vaquier, however. We were informed that just as Vaquier returned, bowed and crushed, to his cell, a letter arrived from the wife he had divorced some years previously.

In it she said :

"MY DEAR JEAN,—I have just learned what has happened to you. It serves you right! I have no pity for you! You not only divorced me, but even accused me of being unfaithful. Have you forgotten our fifteen happy years together? What have you done with my 80,000 francs? I do not wish to increase your despair, but I cannot forgive you. May God do so.

"She who once loved you,

"FRANÇOISE."

This letter was the *coup de grâce*.

Surely, whatever the man's crimes, a woman must needs have no heart at all, to write such a letter to a man about to die. Did she not also remember the fifteen happy years?

Vaquier's last days were spent in weeping and prayer. Father Robin called on him daily, comforting him with the hope that his reprieve would be granted.

Then one evening the door of his cell opened and several grave men came in.

They informed Vaquier formally that his reprieve had not been granted, and that he would be hanged upon the following Tuesday.

With a shriek of "*Mon Dieu, c'est la mort!*" the Frenchman fell back, fainting.

His execution took place on August the 17th, at nine o'clock instead of at eight, because Father Robin could not arrive at Wandsworth earlier.

True to type, Vaquier's last words, gasped out as he stood on the drop, in a voice that was no longer human, were "*Vive la France!*"

So he died! And when I read, as I sometimes do, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," I think of him, and wonder at the complexity of the human soul.

.

I have been often asked, "What kind of man was Vaquier really?"

Well, what can I say? I can only repeat, He was from the south—from Gascony! We have a word in the English dictionary, seldom used, but which conveys the mentality of that particular people. That word is "Gasconade."

French people attribute to the Gascon many foibles,

many faults—some ignoble, some trivial, some entertaining, some despicable—and Vaquier possessed all these.

The blood of the Gascons is heated by continuous sunshine and by rich red wine, pressed from luscious grapes growing in splendid profusion on the plains and slopes which face the Gulf of Lyons and the shores of burning Africa.

Their speech is exuberant, their imaginations wild and fanciful, their moods and passions violent, and as sudden as a tropical storm. In love and hate they know no restraint, and they cannot resist a chance of posing before their fellows.

Vaquier exhibited all these traits during his trial. Many times, while listening to my translations from English into French of the questions and answers, of counsels' comments, and of Mr. Justice Ivory's quietly spoken interjections, he would nod his head and repeat the simpler English words, as if to show that, in spite of his declared lack of knowledge of English he could follow all that was being said.

Not once did he forget that he was the central figure on that tragic stage. His resentment at the English procedure came chiefly from the fact that he was forbidden to talk, and thereby be dramatic. Gagged, as the English law decrees, in the interests of the criminal himself, he considered that he was robbed of his right to make an impression. Moreover, he could not get away from his vanity. I am sure that he was constantly drawing a comparison between himself and the principal character in a play, whose right it is to make his or her entry when the stage is set and the minor players grouped in their places. He was brought to the court a few

minutes late once, with magistrates, counsel, and audience waiting—some breathlessly—for his appearance. He came, and a minute or two later wrote this note on his pad, which he passed to me: "I then came in; they were all waiting for me. OF COURSE!"

His sense of humour was extraordinary and somewhat perverted. He would laugh frankly at some of the statements made by the witnesses. I remonstrated with him once, and his angry reply quelled any further attempts on my part.

In these incidents you have the Gascon—the man of vainglorious ideas, the man of vanity.

His vanity, however, was not of the kind which makes men selfish and unbearable. It was the outward manifestation of an overwhelming desire for popularity, to be the central figure on the stage. His vitality was tremendous, and he was witty. These attributes helped him considerably, and really took the cutting edge off his conceit. He could be, and was, a good fellow in company, and his extravagant gestures and his exaggerated courtesy, particularly to women, offended no one. People in his company felt that little acts such as giving a seat to a woman, done with a profusion of bows, waving of hands, and glances which appeared to convey that she was "the" woman in the world to him, were regarded with good-humoured tolerance rather than disgusted disdain.

In appearance Vaquier was typically of the south. He was short, almost squat, with a head that always seemed disproportionate. His crisply curling hair and wiry beard gave a primæval touch to his flaming yellow eyes. Unkempt, as I have seen him after a night in the cells, the "cave man" impression he made on me

was so strong, that I hardly recognised him as the smartly dressed, polished man who made his bow to Mr. Justice Ivory at Guildford.

He had expressed a desire to be at his best some days before his trial. He insisted on brilliantine—not ordinary brilliantine, but scented with violets. His little pocket-comb was constantly in his hand. With a caressing movement, he would run it through his hair and down his beard.

“ Luckily,” he said one day, “ the grey hairs will go when I am free.”

Once at Woking, when he was being taken back to Brixton, his warder had great difficulty in calming him because his clean shirt had not arrived from the laundry. One of the many written slips passed to his solicitor was, “ When will my clean collars come ? ”

He had many loves before Mrs. Jones came into his life. The first great romance of his youth was an attempted elopement with an Arab Sheik’s sister, which almost ended in death. Vaquier, at the end of his apprenticeship to an electrician, obtained a post in an Algerian factory. Here he met this beautiful Eastern girl with whom he fell in love.

The local conventions that stood between him and his desire failed to deter him. One day he made a bold attempt to carry her off, and so incensed her blood-thirsty brother that he was pursued, and had to abandon the girl. With the aid of a fellow countryman he escaped death and was smuggled out of the country.

He soon recovered from his disappointment, and next went to Tunis. He worked for a time in a power station,

but his persistence in decrying the machinery and suggesting improvements roused the resentment of his superiors, and he was dismissed.

When his time for military service arrived he was drafted into a regiment of Zouaves, with whom he served in Tunis with wild, turbulent, and amorous *joyeux* for companions.

He went to Marseilles and Bordeaux after his service, studied in Paris, and eventually drifted back to Limoux. He opened a cutlery shop, and later married Mme. Françoise Carbon, a widow about twenty years his senior.

He prospered, started an agency for Sheffield cutlery, and opened a larger shop at Bordeaux. Here he invented an ice-cream machine and an improved microphone for gramophones. During the war he worked on munitions. He developed an enthusiasm for wireless, and lectured on the science to French and Italian officers.

When he returned, after the war, he divorced his elderly wife for infidelity, and wandered to Biarritz, where eventually he met Mrs. Jones.

And that meeting led to his journey to England, his fatal visit to Byfleet, his trial for murder—and, ultimately, to the gallows.

As he once said to me, "Every man's fate is hung around his neck at birth."

. . . And on these words, that reveal in their simplicity the wisdom of the East, I will end my story as I began it, by saying that most denizens of the underworld, or those who some day rejoin them, are abnormal! They are the victims of circumstance or heredity, and therefore truly a race apart.

Often when entering the courts of the Old Bailey, and facing the ever-changing prisoners in the dock, I have had the feeling that I was in a sanatorium for the mentally unbalanced. *Væ victis!*

THE END

